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SEQUEL

TO

“OUR LIBERAL MOVEMENT”





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“OUR LIBERAL MOVEMENT”

BY

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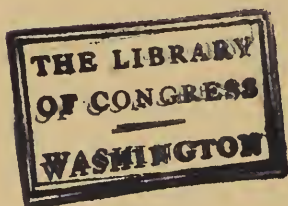
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# SEQUEL TO

## "OUR LIBERAL MOVEMENT."

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### I.

#### THE OLD SCHOOL AND ITS WORK.<sup>1</sup>

ONE year ago William Henry Furness, then in his ninety-fourth year, — the widest known, the most venerated, and the best beloved name among us, — was appointed the speaker of this occasion. It was an act of confiding trust in his perpetual youth; for of him that may be said more literally than of any other whom we have known, which Homer says of Nestor, that "from his tongue flowed speech more sweet than honey, yet already two generations of mortal men were passed away, while he stood as a prince among the third." And, when some of us heard him at the conference in Washington, four months later, we listened to a voice as resonant and firm, if not quite so mellow, as when he spoke to us in his earlier prime.

It is, as you will easily understand, with much diffidence and reluctantly that I have consented to occupy the hour which that voice should have filled;

<sup>1</sup> An address before the Alumni of the Harvard Divinity School, June 23, 1896.

and I did not promise to undertake the task until it proved impossible to be undertaken by some one at once more nearly contemporary with Dr. Furness and more closely associated with his earlier life-work. Besides, it was thought fitting that this should be an occasion not only or chiefly of personal commemoration, but for bringing into a single view the work of an entire period, which the passing away of that one life seems suddenly to have thrown back in the perspective, and to have made a scene in history by itself.

Two circumstances, which I will not dwell on, set this view of our topic in special relief to-day, — the recent passing away of so many of the “Old Guard” among our ministers, making a death-list in the last eighteen months of ten, whose average age was considerably over eighty, and the average length of their ordained service nearly sixty years;<sup>1</sup> and, second, the completion of seventy years since the building and consecration of this Divinity Hall in which we are now met. And I may add that the reason of my speaking is that what I shall offer is in the way of personal testimony rather than an historical survey simply or a general essay, since every name I shall have to recall in these memories is that of one toward whom I have stood in some direct personal

<sup>1</sup> Their names in the order of seniority are: Thomas T. Stone (1801–95); W. H. Furness (1802–96); J. H. Morison (1808–96); H. A. Miles (1809–95); G. W. Briggs (1810–95); F. W. Holland (1811–95); E. B. Willson (1820–95); J. F. Moors (1821–95); O. B. Frothingham (1822–95); Augustus Woodbury (1825–95). Dr. Stone had been associated with our body since 1846. The others were all members of the Harvard Divinity School.

relation of respect, gratitude, affection, kindred, or mutual help.

The history of this School properly begins with the time when a regular post-graduate course of theology was established here under the presidency of Dr. Kirkland. The class of 1811, I believe, was the first to which this course was open. But the Divinity School apart from the College was not formally organized till 1819, with the appointment of Andrews Norton as Professor of Sacred Literature. It will be proper, therefore, to begin our survey by considering briefly what that first appointment signified in the teachings and character of the School.

The date here given was, as you may remember, just twenty years before Professor Norton led the way in vehement protest against the newer liberalism heralded in Emerson's Divinity School address, which he denounced as "the latest form of infidelity." Here it is difficult for us of a younger generation to do justice to his position, or perhaps even to understand it. It is one of the tragedies of the intellectual life when a sincere and able leader of opinion finds his maturest work already outgrown before it has reached its final shape by the advance of general thought, and outlives, as Mr. Norton did for fifteen years, his own cordial sympathy with that advance. Till he gave up his professorship in 1830, his was unquestionably the dominating mind in this school, which was largely guided by his influence till the new tide of opinion had well set in. Even then his sharpest opponents spoke — Theodore Parker, for example, spoke to me — with a singular

deference of his unchallenged scholarship and rare mental ability. We are apt to think of him as merely a defender of Unitarian opinion on its negative side, in "a statement of reasons for not believing" certain articles of the popular creed, or else as holding an advocate's brief for "the genuineness of the Gospels," which he maintained, with laborious erudition, in an argument whose sense has grown obsolete and even unintelligible in the light of later criticism, — nay, was already clearly seen by many to be so before the argument appeared in a printed book. I remember a conversation with him in 1850, in which this topic (it is true) was not touched upon, but which left on my mind the impression of a certain intellectual loneliness, if not despondency, which one grieves to find in a spirit so brave, clear, and widely accomplished as his. He was then sixty-four years old. But we should think rather of the work he did at twenty-six: the strenuous and tonic quality he gave then to the earlier liberalism in the "General Repository;" his great service as the pioneer of a wider literature and a higher criticism among us in the "Select Journal" conducted by him and that accomplished scholar, his friend, Charles Folsom; the welcome he gave to some of the purest and tenderest voices of the modern muse; and the share he has contributed, as a true religious poet, to our own treasuries of devotion, in a few hymns that are among the very finest of their class. And we should remember, too, the filial respect and gratitude with which his pupils in theology owned their debt to his grave and



scrupulous criticism, while they might seem — as Dr. Furness did — to be giving it a turn that would cost him many a pang. Surely, it was no ill augury for the work of this School that for eleven of its first years this veteran scholar and critic guided its teachings by his master mind.

Though devoted from his youth to the study of theology and the service of the higher intellectual life, and though himself a man of strong religious conviction, Mr. Norton was the only professor in this school, down to the appointment of Ezra Abbot, who had not actually occupied a pulpit. Possibly, this may have been from distaste of natural temperament, or reluctance to sacrifice that “quiet and still air of delightful studies” in which his lot was cast. It was, at any rate, a mark of his sensitive independence, perhaps of a certain proud humility, that he always refused the academic title which is conventionally held proper for a theological professor: he was never “Doctor” or “Reverend,” to the end of his days. These titles he held the due only of ordained workers in the ministry. A keen critic he always was, as we have heard, of the pulpit exercises of other men, younger men, his pupils here; and if they were sometimes more daunted than helped, as I fear they were, by the severe standard he judged them by, no doubt they would feel the value of it afterward. It was a man of his own training, we must remember, George Ripley, who stood out against him boldest and longest on a question touching the foundations of religious belief; and, whatever else his students learned or failed to

learn, I am sure he taught them respect for perfect integrity and honest candor of the spoken word.

The next influence comparable with Professor Norton's in amount and depth for its effect on the life nurtured here was, I suppose, that of Henry Ware, Junior, a man of radically different mental temper, but absolutely harmonious in conviction and aim. More than any other, I should say, he was during his twelve years' service the pastor and apostle in his calling, — in a very special sense, what Matthew Arnold so finely says of Emerson, "the friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit." He was put and sustained in the place of service for which he was felt to be singularly fit, by the special contributions of friends who created that place expressly for him. He was a modest but excellent scholar, a man of very precious and tender pastoral experience, of poetic gift, also, who would (his brother said of him) have desired more than anything the vocation of a poet, shy of native temperament, and often slow of utterance, yet capable of fervent, ready, direct, and incisive speech, of sympathies warm, wide, quick, generous, and helpful, and, as much as any man we have ever had among us, having what we may call the very genius of piety, — a choice gift which he shared with a few such men as Channing, Furness, Gannett, Dr. Hosmer, and Ephraim Peabody. It is impossible not to associate with his influence one very noble phase of the life that has gone forth from this School: I mean a certain devoted and heroic consecration to a ministry of holiness, which I might illustrate by

many examples, but will here mention only two, — our own “Apostle Eliot” of St. Louis, and that beloved and valiant “saint of all the humanities,” Samuel Joseph May, — men alike in their clear insight and great moral courage, though ever so wide apart in the lines of service they were severally true to. This quality in its teaching we associate as distinctly with the name of Ware as we connect its order of intellectual service with those of Norton, Palfrey, and Noyes. I wish there were time to speak fitly of them all. But here I must deal with currents of influence, not with names of men; and there will be some now present who, with a certain filial gratitude, will always associate the particular influence I speak of with him who is recalled oftener than any other I can remember by an epithet unusual among us, and very precise in its application, as “the sainted Ware.”

His name reminds us, again, that this has never, as its proper title, been called a school of Theology, but a school of Divinity. It may be well, just here, to say a word of what this designation seems to imply. I will do it by dwelling a moment on an aspect of this School, or of the life sheltered and trained in it, which we see perhaps most distinctly when we look back to those years among the “thirties,” or a little earlier, and recall the men whose life-work was inspired and shaped here then, who make our best illustration of the characteristic thing here done. Representative names are those of Ephraim and Andrew Peabody, George Ripley, Samuel Atkins Eliot, James Freeman Clarke, Wil-

liam Henry Channing, Henry Whitney Bellows, and Theodore Parker. I choose these from a long list, not merely for their eminence, but for the variety of gifts they showed. Certainly it would not be easy to devise any one type or descriptive name that would fairly include them all. But they seem to me to illustrate very well a feature in this School, which may possibly distinguish it favorably among some other schools more famous and more richly endowed. The complaint always made of it in its earlier years, was its poverty of endowment. Two men, it was said by way of reproach, were made to do the work of five or six: the first thing wanted, we were incessantly told, was a wealthier endowment. But to such complaint I should always reply that we must not "think that the gift of God can be purchased with money." The essentials of the higher education are a consecrated will, intellectual opportunity, a wide, buoyant, and elastic atmosphere of thought, sufficient guidance — but not too much — in the wide wilderness of learning, and, above all, great mental leisure and freedom, with great joy and wealth of spiritual companionship. And it may be fairly questioned whether all these may not be had at their best in the inverse ratio of that elaborated equipment which is often more a burden than a help to the nobler intellectual life. Even if we suppose poverty in such things to have its difficulties, yet it is through difficulties, not facilities, that men win the temper fittest for their work in life.

But I am not speaking here of difficulties, — here,

where university life is overburdened with its wealth of opportunity. I speak only of the two essential things, — large freedom of choice and large leisure of companionship, — these, with the motive and the guidance that are just enough for the best uses of that freedom and that leisure. It has never seemed to me that we suffered any serious loss in that our teachers were only two, when those two were Henry Ware and Dr. Noyes. I am not speaking here of the theological department in a university, — which needs (no doubt) a wide variety of special learning, — but of a Divinity School such as this was sixty years ago, where the first need is personal influence and inspiration, restrained but not dominated by critical erudition. And I am not saying that this is a better thing than the other, but only that it was a good thing in its way to have, while we were waiting for the other.

Now, for the time we have in view it may even be contended that it was better than the other would have been if we could have had the other then. The liberal movement, which in a way it has been the business of this School to guide and help, is a movement even less of thought than it is of life, a movement even less of theology than of practical conduct. And at that time its aim and method were far less precise than now. The questions that were coming up had more to do with the vague idealism which we term "Transcendental" than they had with the very precise and tangible scientific problems of the present day. Nobody knew, for one thing, or could possibly suspect, how far the advance



of criticism would affect our interpretation of the Bible, or how far the advance of natural science would invade and alter our very conception of human duty and destiny. At such a time, with an astounding amount of shallow and restless radicalism, with appalling questions of society and politics looming, too, in the horizon, it was of far more account to the student that his mental atmosphere should be elastic and wide than that his mental training should be carried on within rigid lines. At such a time there is an inconvenience in being committed to too sharply defined opinions. Opinion, to be worth anything, must be long held in solution in a medium (so far as may be) transparent and colorless, and must crystallize very slowly about some nucleus of positive conviction, which is the gift not of logic, but of life. No opinion that was ever held, I should think, was more sincerely held, more wholesome, more manly, conducive whether to a purer piety or a more devoted humanity than the form of supernaturalism in which Norton and Ware and their whole generation were trained; yet in the next generation it was destined to be completely outgrown, while they, as honest men as ever lived, could never learn or endure to see it so. That was in one way a great pity, causing as it did painful misunderstandings and great loss of moral force. But it would have been a far greater pity if, in the temper of that day, there had been here an equipment of learning that should compact that half-way view into a full-grown system and an intellectual creed.

From that worse evil, it may be, the very poverty

of this School protected us. At least, there was not a corps of teachers numerous enough, or well enough armed with modern appliances of learning, to tie us down by exactions of routine-work to the mastery of an elaborated method in theology, which we should see now to be painfully inadequate. I think that, on the whole, a healthier growth has come of it than if there had been. I do not easily associate such wealth, vigor, variety, and independence in the religious life as we recall in the names I recited a little while ago, — take only what is signified to us in the last two, Bellows and Parker, names that belong to the period next before my own, — with the stricter training appropriate to a purely scientific theology that is up to the present standard. That would mean a longer time of pupilage than is good for the average man, — at any rate, longer than would have been possible to us then. I give my testimony for what it is worth; but I know that, for one, the best piece of work I did while here was entirely outside all school courses, actual or conceivable: it was an attempt to master the principles of the modern scientific method, with such guidance as could be had then, in the seven thick volumes of Whewell and John Stuart Mill, aided by some light in pure mathematics from my near friend of those days, Thomas Hill, and brightened by a good deal of talk with President Walker, who was so generous of his shrewd, wise, kindly, and helpful companionship to us younger men. This may serve as, if not a brilliant yet a useful example of what I suppose was very common, — the accidental and incidental

benefit that befell from the less formal methods of a Divinity School in that earlier day.

I will now attempt to recall one or two aspects of the field where our life-work lay, for which we had been preparing under such influences as I have described. The date I have here in mind is 1840, which marks the end of the period spoken of hitherto and the beginning of that in which I became a sharer in its tasks. Our life-work was to be found in that part of the Lord's vineyard for which we were in training, to dress it and to keep it, every man according to his several ability.

The soil of that vineyard was just then remarkably fertile in "isms," which grew in it like weeds. These I would define as so many off-hand creeds, of one article apiece, which the believer in it accepted with a certain romantic faith, and spent his life in thrusting upon the consciences of his fellow-men. All these more or less abortive creeds had, I think, an aim more mundane than the curious other-worldliness which has come into being since the famous "Chardon Street Conference," where they swarmed preparatory to taking flight, — where I witnessed a great twinkling and sputtering of new lights, some of them set rather awkwardly in their candlesticks, and not nearly so neatly trimmed as hotly burning. This took place, we must remember, while Brook Farm was an enterprise just set on foot, and five years before the first advent of modern spiritism. Some of those embryo schemes were of a certain vague but high idealism, and were the precursors of the



Theosophy and Christian Science of our day. Some met the social problems of the time in a generous, devoted, and heroic temper, testified in brave campaigns of conscience, such as Christian socialism, the temperance reform, and (most chivalrous of all) the "old-school" antislavery crusade. Some were not much more than the whim of a few eccentrics, — the no-Sabbath, no-property, no-government, no-resistance leaguers. But, in general, they were "sports," or offshoots, of that growth of modern liberalism, suddenly become conscious of itself, and without the experience of that twofold discipline which has so sternly held them in check during the half-century which has elapsed since, — the discipline of fact, painfully learned through the struggle that came to a crisis in our Civil War, with that rather chaotic chapter which describes our political performance since; the discipline of science, — for the time I speak of was twenty years before Darwin had brought home to the common mind the fact of evolution in natural things, or Spencer had expounded the general law which has greatly chastened and chilled the revolutionary temper so vagrant and rampant then.

And, it must be remembered, all these escapades of moral knight-errantry took a shape in this community, with its Puritan antecedents, at once serious, sternly practical, and even, in a sense, intensely religious. Each, in its fashion, set itself about taking the kingdom of heaven by violence; each, no doubt sincerely, deemed itself the one indispensable gateway to the New Jerusalem, the earthly

paradise. It may be easily seen, then, what a warp must have been given to the minds in training for their life-work here. Those minds had chosen their vocation because it represented to them the ideal side of life. They were for that very reason susceptible to this chaotic clamor of many tongues, and fascinated by some one or another phase of that ethical ideal, which glances in facets as multitudinous as a cut and polished gem. How would the sober tradition of their religious culture be invaded, how would the grave lessons of their theological or philosophic training be beguiled, by these so many voices from the world about, when not one of those voices, as their own Scripture itself assured them, was without its proper signification? Who knew whether it might not be the one voice to show you or me the particular path it was ordained for us to follow, forsaking every other?

In looking through the catalogue of these years, we see how large a proportion of those educated here have found their real vocation in some other thing than what they seemed to have chosen. Life is so different from our theories and plans of life! The liberal ministry, as we have sought it or accepted it, has been often said to be like certain localities, which are good to grow up in, but particularly good to emigrate away from. This may be a drawback in a profession, or in the education that prepares one for a profession; but it need not be a disaster or a reproach. It is a special glory of the life educated here that it has turned so easily

to so large a variety of outside work. Among its ministers of the Word there have been a fair proportion better known to the public as teachers, historians, artists, or poets; some as agents of public charities, literary editors and critics, or correctors of the press; some few as soldiers valiant in the field, or men of high authority in public station. All this was in answer to the demand of a restless time, a great national crisis, an immature civilization, a fast-growing, ever-hopeful community. It was a part of the work this School had to do, — a gift to the world not inferior, perhaps, to ever so imposing a record of ecclesiastics, scholiasts, and devotees.

How could I better illustrate this feature of its history than by the name of that noble friend of my earlier studies and my after ministry, — John Gorham Palfrey, eight years professor in this School? As the successor of Buckminster and Everett, he had dignified a pulpit not second in lustre to any of that time with laborious and accomplished service. As instructor here, he, among other tasks, prepared a text-book of several Oriental dialects, and was a pioneer in our first attempts at a scientific criticism of the Old Testament. As a member of Congress, later on, he sacrificed popularity to honest independence, becoming one of the original founders of the Free Soil party. As postmaster of Boston, he was a reformer of official methods, and set an example, which some would deem fantastic, of scrupulous integrity in his accounts. Always a laborious student, the well-known classic

historian of New England, and able among the ablest editors of the "North American Review," he was, as a gentleman, cultivated and courteous, with abounding vivacity and wit. As a man of conscience, he set the high example of liberating nineteen slaves whom he had selected as his share in a family inheritance, and generously aiding them afterwards, as if dependent members of his own household. Such was the versatile and brilliant intellectual life he brought to this high service. By so much was the theologian ennobled in the man!

I have spoken of Dr. Palfrey as a pioneer among us in the scientific criticism of the Old Testament. This is better seen in his attempt, published in 1840, at a constructive theory of the book of Genesis, — which he regarded as a compilation from earlier sources by the hand of Moses, — than in his defence of the Mosaic authority of the Pentateuch throughout, which is quite on the lines of the conventional apologists. These lines were broken into, four years later, with a much bolder hand, by Mr. Norton in his "Note on the Old Testament," which is as radical in tone as anything we have had since, but for its very characteristic reserve touching Moses and Elijah. Dr. Noyes's argument on Messianic prophecy, in the "Christian Examiner" of 1834, — which brought out the famous hint of prosecution under the old Massachusetts law of blasphemy, — we may take to have been (however heretical it looked) a piece of legitimate textual criticism; and it is not, perhaps, to be counted as a conscious departure from the tradi-

tional point of view. His eminent service to this School by his intellectual candor, honesty, and courage, in guiding it through a critical period of transition, by which he earned a debt of gratitude from his immediate students such as was never quite due to any other, belongs to a time considerably later than that I have here in view. But these three, taken together, show how completely the later method of thinking that prevails among us, both literary and historical, which in the last half-century has almost wholly blotted out the older view, was an outgrowth of the training of this School. Dr. Furness's tender and sympathetic treatment of the gospel story, which ingenuously attempts to identify natural and supernatural, while keeping close to the letter of the record, claims to follow out legitimately the lessons he had learned under Norton's teaching, since what it holds to have been natural in Jesus would be supernatural in anybody else. And it was only one easy step in advance when Theodore Parker, with temper and motive widely different from theirs, threw wide open to public gaze the gateway of the course that has been followed since. Emerson's address in this very chapel in 1838, — the controversy between Norton and Ripley that followed the next year, — the group of later eloquent expounders, including John Weiss, Samuel Johnson, Octavius Frothingham, Samuel Longfellow, and William Potter, not to speak of work done by their associates still living, — are so many dates that connect every phase of the advancing liberalism in



theology with names, influences, and traditions belonging to this School. Not one of them betrays a motive merely academic, speculative, critical, or scientific. Every one made a step forward into a new and wider intellectual life. No matter how frank the negation, it always sought, not a narrower or feebler, but a larger and a robuster faith.

In this sketch I have had in view a definite period in the history of this School, — a period which ended fifty-six years ago, and had most to do with shaping out that life whose general features we have been trying to retrace. For this reason I have said nothing as yet, and can say but a few words now in closing, of two men to whom I am personally indebted very much, whose best work in life was too closely related with our present topic to be quite left out in our survey, — Convers Francis and Frederic Henry Hedge.

Professor Francis was somewhat on in years, not far from fifty, at his coming here; and it may be that his most fruitful work in life, his most kindling influence, and the singular esteem yielded him by the men of his own time, belong rather to the date of his more than twenty years' ministry in Watertown than to the somewhat hampered and (I fear) disappointed toils of his later service. His earlier manhood fell in with the sudden widening of the intellectual field by what was, to all intents and purposes, the discovery of a new literature, a new philosophy, a new way of thinking among us. I do not dare to say whether the enthusiasm that

greeted this fresh discovery did or did not exaggerate the great qualities of German letters or German thought. For the space of half a generation, while the many looked on ignorantly or jealously askance, there were a chosen few to whom it was almost as if there were no other letters and no other thought worth their study. In the heart of this select circle, the mind of Dr. Francis received with eager enjoyment and quenchless thirst the treasures thus thrown open, though it might be in their most arid form. For it was a mind more sympathetic than critical, widely and generously eclectic, almost too impartial in its likes, and apparently having no dislikes at all. As Theodore Parker, his grateful younger friend, said to me, he "did not gravitate to the stronger thoughts or the greater minds." Such width of mental sympathy lacks some stringent mental tonic. To one of less receptive faculty, his must seem a superfluity of mere possession, which dulled the edge of independent thinking, and, like a lens inconveniently near, blurred the sharp outline of the object you were trying to define. But to one seeking material for unbiassed judgment nothing could be finer than that quiet impartiality, that untiring kindness and patience, that lavish generosity in putting at your service, in any shape you would, the stores he had so diligently gathered. No one, I am sure, ever served the interest of true learning here with more scrupulous devotion; and the placid widening-out of the circle of our knowledge under his kindly influence was of more value, in that day of eager

anticipation and hastily formed conclusion, than some of us were quite willing to understand.

Dr. Hedge's large and richly stored intelligence had had the advantage of a far more thorough early discipline than most of us have received, or than could have been given in this country at the time he needed it most. In his school-days German became to him a second mother tongue. Thus not only did he benefit from the tonic method of the German "gymnasium," but he was guarded from the illusion which many suffered under, of taking all to be sublime, august, and true that came to them in the long and many syllables of that magic tongue, — since he knew, among other things, German school-boy slang. The great boon he gained from that source was, however, qualified in him by two specially English gifts — a certain wealth of poetic imagination, with a feeling of the rhythmic melody of language that might easily have made one of less critical or reflective temper eminent as orator or poet; and a deep ground of ethical conviction, which wholly dominated his speculative faculty, and made him restive under the restraint of any merely intellectual creed. More than any other of like philosophic turn whom I have ever known, philosophy was to him a department of literature, not a system of regulated opinion. More than with any other of so wide literary accomplishment, the chief interest with him lay in the ranges of higher contemplation. The more he studied the results of speculative science, the less he was satisfied with any claim it put forth to solve that most



tantalizing of problems, how to give a true intellectual theory of the universe. It is likely that this sense of inadequacy troubled at intervals his philosophic conscience; for he never quite let that problem go, or fully accepted the positivist dogma (which he inclined to) that in the nature of things it is unsolvable. His refuge was that which many of the best minds of every age have found, — religious discipline and religious meditation. The visible work he did was by no means a full measure of his ability; yet he was one of the most painstaking as well as conscientious of workers, one of the widest in intellectual range, and a diligent learner to the end of his days. His most characteristic treatise, "Reason in Religion," was closely associated with his earlier labors here; and it remains among the most highly valued of the agencies that have enriched the thinking faculty in a generation later than his own.

I have thus outlined, so far as my allotted hour permits, the work of the Old School as we have known it, illustrated by the names and incidents most familiar in its history. How that work has been developed and carried on in the half-century since the period chiefly had in view, and how its influence has gone forth upon the mind and life of our community, is a topic requiring a larger treatment and a different hand. I trust that what has now been said may serve, in some slight measure, as an introduction to such a theme.

## II.

### GERMAN INFLUENCE.<sup>1</sup>

I N order to bring the vast topic of German Theology in any intelligible way within my limits, I must confine myself to the very narrowest interpretation of the words in which my subject is announced. And these must be understood to mean, not how Unitarianism is to be found *in* German theology, for it is not there at all—at least in name. The German theologians, for reasons which I need not explain, are generally bound by Lutheran or other State traditions and conditions ; and while it may often be said of the best of them that their *way of thinking* is quite in harmony with ours, their *form of doctrine* is wholly different. I shall not, therefore, trouble myself or you about that, but take what is the only serviceable rendering of the words of my title, namely : How, when, and where has the course of Unitarianism in America been affected by contact with German theology since the beginning of that movement of thought among us which we term Transcendental ?

This brings me, again, to a very precise date, which I must take for my starting-point. That date I shall take, for reasons of convenience, at just

<sup>1</sup> An address delivered in Channing Hall, in November, 1888.

fifty years ago. And, as there is a personal equation in all these things which more or less warps our judgment of them, perhaps you will pardon me the impropriety of a word to explain what those reasons of convenience are. I was at that time a student in college, among circumstances that led me to take an eager interest in the discussions then going on, and to look forward with timid hope to the part I might possibly be afterwards called to take in them. I was in the dear and serious household of my mother's brother Henry Ware, Junior, who affectionately encouraged such early hopes in his kindly but taciturn way. I had listened with a vague but exhilarating delight to Mr. Emerson's Divinity School Address, given that summer, — which had, as you know, shocked some, while it had charmed others, as the first clear word of "another gospel, which yet was not another." So that I was already prepared, when a year later the battle of the books began, to follow its changing fortunes with a degree of personal feeling as to the issues involved which has not been in the least diminished to this day. In short, to speak with still greater precision, the exact crisis that brought to the front the bearing of German theology upon American opinion was the publication, in 1839, of Professor Andrews Norton's Divinity School Address on "The Latest Form of Infidelity."

Here, perhaps, I ought to add a further word of explanation. First, as to myself, — for by nurture and habit I clung strongly to the more conservative side in the debate that followed. I have always

considered that Professor Norton had the better of his opponents in scholarship and logic; till the age of twenty-five I intended or expected that my place would be on that side; and if I have altered from this position since, it has been not so much due (as I think) to the course of that discussion as to a passage of argument with that rude logician, Orestes A. Brownson, during the crisis of the notable change by which he became a Catholic. Next, as to others; for the real point at issue in that debate has been often misunderstood, as if it had been the question of admitting the supernatural or miraculous in Christianity. On the contrary, in one of his letters addressed to Professor Norton, Mr. George Ripley says: "For my own part, I cannot avoid the conclusion that the miracles related in the Gospels were actually wrought by Jesus:" and in a pamphlet of the same date, understood to have been written by Theodore Parker, he says, "I believe that Jesus, like other religious teachers, wrought miracles." And as neither of these men has been accused of Jesuistry or moral cowardice, it appears that the question at issue was not as to their opinions, which at that time were in the main conventional and customary, but as to a new and unfamiliar order of thought, which was seen to be powerfully affecting the principles and foundations of men's religious belief. What this new order of thought was, and what has been its effect among us during this past half-century, it will be my duty to make as clear as I can within the limits allowed me.

That influence, whatever it was, we ascribe in a vague and general way to German theology, especially from the time of Schleiermacher. But German theology of that period — that is, of the last ninety years — is (as I said) a very vast and unmanageable topic ; and I must therefore narrow my field still further, by pointing out three great departments into which it may be roughly divided.

First is that which especially dates from Schleiermacher himself, though it also has to do with those famous philosophical schools which appear to have had absolute control in the higher thought of Germany down to about forty years ago, — chiefly, the school of Hegel. It was these that gave the great intellectual impulse, and that appeared to open up an entirely new interpretation of religious thought and the religious life ; and hence created that fresh enthusiasm among some of our younger men half a century or more ago, which we call Transcendentalism, and Professor Norton called “ the latest form of Infidelity.” This (as I just said) did not so much affect men’s particular opinions as their whole way of looking at the subject of Religion. We may call it, if you please, the German *Speculative Theology*.

Second, and producing its effect more gradually, is a movement which started still farther back, largely from the impulse given by the German poet and critic, Lessing. I may describe it in a general way by saying that its effect has been to take the Bible out of that sanctuary where it was regarded as a holy thing by itself, never to be judged, but only to be explained and then accepted reveringly by the



human mind; to take it, I say, from that sanctuary, to class it among our other literary treasures, and to interpret it just as we do other books of history, of legend or tradition, of moral exhortation, or of religious poetry. I say nothing for or against this result, which I suppose that we are all at this day fully agreed to accept. I only say that to bring it about took something like a century of controversy, often very angry and bitter; and that during this time there was evolved a mass of erudition, argument, exposition, speculation, literally unspeakable in its dimensions, which makes the field of German *Critical Theology*. And it is the diligent cultivation of this field among our own best scholars — including Professor Noyes, Dr. Hedge, Theodore Parker, and James Freeman Clarke, against the strong protest of the elder school represented by Professor Norton — that has brought about the most marked changes in the body of opinion known as American Unitarianism.

Third, we must reckon a field with which I have nothing whatever to do here, although in some ways it is perhaps the most important of all. For German theology, in its large sense, has been one of the greatest and most remarkable educating influences of the last half-century to a very large class of minds. Every topic suggested in both the lines of discussion I have described has been taken up, and with infinite painstaking, erudition, and patience followed out to the last slender filament of inference or investigation on which it was possible to string an opinion or a guess. It would be mere pedantry

to cite the names of the innumerable laborers in that wide field;<sup>1</sup> and any attempt to explore it would only lead us away from the strict and narrow line we have to follow. That portion of the field we may call the German *Theology of Erudition*. With it, as I have said, I have for the present nothing to do.

I must now go back, and explain the prominence which has been given in my topic to the name of Schleiermacher.

Frederick Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher was born in 1768, and died in 1834, at the age of sixty-six. He was a man of the very finest religious genius, a preacher of extraordinary fervor and wealth of thought, of a moral nature singularly clinging, sympathetic, and emotional, a scholar of vast erudition even for a German, a student of great and indefatigable industry, and a teacher, or intimate adviser, of personal weight and influence almost unparalleled. Professor Philip Schaff calls him, without qualification, "the greatest divine of the nineteenth century." To understand the ground of his unexampled and unique influence upon the religious thought of his day, we should take into account that very early in life he saw clearly these two things: first, that the doctrinal system built up during the Reformation had completely gone to seed, and existed only as a lifeless and sterile form—at least in Germany and among the educated classes, where his work was, as we see in the life of Lessing—and must perish

<sup>1</sup> Tholuck and Neander are perhaps those which will be most widely and gratefully recognized.

unless a new soul could be breathed into it; and, second, that the idea, the method, the discipline, embodied in the Christian Church and known to the Christian conscience, must form the type, the model, the condition, under which such new religious life could be had, — and this, if it must be, independent of all doctrinal forms whatever. To show the intensity of his conviction on this point, I copy here his own words: “Religion was the mother’s bosom, in whose sacred warmth and darkness my young life was nourished and prepared for the world which lay before me all unknown; and she still remained with me, *when God and immortality vanished before my doubting eyes.*” This, I say, is his characteristic testimony to the reality of the religious life, wholly independent of all doctrinal forms whatever. And we must take it as our starting-point, in estimating both the peculiar nature of his influence upon the mind of his time, and the peculiar dread of that influence which we find amongst those who, like Professor Norton, honestly held that very clearly defined opinions were essential to any hold at all upon the Christian faith. To such minds that language sounded merely vague, delusive, and sophistical.

The date of the first strong impression made by Schleiermacher upon the mind of his time was the year 1799, when he published a series of eloquent pamphlet “Discourses” on Religion, addressed to “the cultivated among its despisers.” As to this date we have to bear in mind that it was just at the coming in of the tide of reaction that followed the



extravagant anti-religious fury of the French Revolution, and set so strongly towards conservatism in politics and religion : so that he was doing in Germany a like task to that attempted just then by Chateaubriand in France. But we must look back of that date, to see how this religious reaction took just the shape it did in his mind. The father of Schleiermacher was a good old-fashioned Calvinistic preacher, chaplain to a regiment; and, for convenience in some of his wanderings, he put the boy at school among the "Moravian Brethren." These made the most pious of religious communities. In spiritual descent their tradition came down from Bohemian exiles, who carried into their retreat the same religious ardor that had flamed with such obstinate fury in the Hussite wars; but in them, or in their followers, it was tempered to a sweet, somewhat austere, and most nobly self-sacrificing piety. It was the placid faith of a company of Moravian missionaries in a storm at sea that had touched John Wesley more profoundly than ever before with the reality and power of a religious life. And this obscure community was "the mother's bosom, warm and dark," which nourished the germs of that young life given to its charge.

The later experience of university life, and the deliberate study of the Deistical writers (then making a good deal of noise), which he undertook against his father's earnest protest, did not, as we have seen, extinguish the deep sense that *religion in the soul* is the most profound and blessed of realities; while they did convince him that it must be interpreted

to the educated mind in a way very different from the old doctrinal scheme, — a way in which the form of expression should be, avowedly, not the adequate statement of a fact of human knowledge, but the symbol, or image (*Vorstellung*) of that which far transcends all human knowledge. Hence he chose such phrases as seemed to minds like Professor Norton's a mere playing fast and loose with sacred things, sophistry or conscious self-deception, "veil-weaving" <sup>1</sup> about one's real opinions, so as to hide their true meaning from others' eyes. Thus, departing from the common language of theology, Schleiermacher speaks not of "God the Creator and Moral Governor" (which are the terms insisted on by Martineau and English thinkers generally), but rather of "the Divine Life" and our "communion with the Living God: a sharp distinction," he says, "is to be drawn between the Living God and a *personal* God;" not of "a Future Life of Judgment," in the terms familiar to most Christians, but rather of the "Eternal Life," or deathlessness of the spiritual principle in man, and of its blending in the Hereafter with the Universal Life, in language that implied, or seemed to imply, that its conscious identity would be lost. <sup>2</sup> In short, his whole system of doctrine (*Glaubenslehre*) — which is developed at great length and very elaborately — appears to be built on the interpreting not of any written word, but of the actual experience of the religious life. Its

<sup>1</sup> *Schleiermacher* (as Professor Norton reminds us) is a German word signifying "veil-maker."

<sup>2</sup> Compare Martineau's "Study of Religion," ii. 355-360.

data are purely *the facts of Christian consciousness*; and, as a countryman of his has said of him, it was "quite uncertain whether Schleiermacher believed or not in revelation, miracle, the divinity of Christ, the trinity, the personality of God, or the immortality of the soul. In his theological phrases he would avoid all that could distinctly mean this or that." In his exposition of faith he starts with this one point of fact: *I am a Christian*; this I am by nature and inheritance. By introspection and analysis, not by study of the letter of the gospel, he will then determine what that fact implies; what is the meaning of incarnation, atonement, resurrection, in the terms of religious experience; and this shall be his Christian creed. Of course, all sharp bounds of doctrine disappear; and this simplicity of method, carried out with the wonderful wealth and fervor of his exposition, makes him the great master of liberal theology, by whatever name his disciples may be called.

But it is not my business here to expound Schleiermacher's method or doctrinal system, however briefly: only to show how the order of thought I have been trying to describe came into effect on New England Unitarianism at that particular time; why it fascinated some while it alarmed or offended others, and in what ways it has modified the character of our religious thinking ever since.

This order of thought was (as I have already hinted) further strengthened by those schools of German philosophy so powerful in the first half of this century, which came to be eagerly studied

among us about fifty years ago. I have nothing whatever to do with them here as systems of opinion. I only speak of them because they shared the same obloquy with the new theology from those who imperfectly understood them; and because they have strongly affected the current of opinion since — more strongly than most of us are apt to think. Not directly; for few cared to study them, or could possibly understand them if they did. But those few have in a very special sense been the teachers of our generation, and have influenced even the popular way of thinking among us more than we are often aware. James Freeman Clarke, for example, was strongly attracted by these philosophies and by the theology founded upon them. Then there are two well-known works of two very accomplished students in this direction: "Reason in Religion" by Dr. Hedge, to whom German came to be almost a second mother tongue during his school-days passed in Germany, and who had as much to do as anybody in naturalizing the new order of thought among us; and "The Science of Thought," by Professor Everett, which is understood to be a product of the philosophy of Hegel, — that philosophy held in especial dread and abhorrence by sober thinkers among us half a century ago. Just in proportion to the seriousness and the religiousness of their way of thinking have the men of a younger generation been influenced by such books as these.

But the philosophy I speak of has had another effect among us, more direct and more intelligible. Fifty years ago, as I have shown, Unitarians were

substantially all agreed in accepting Christianity as a special and supernatural revelation, in the common sense of those terms. I have quoted both George Ripley and Theodore Parker, in their controversy with Professor Norton, as professing, with the utmost apparent simplicity, their own belief in the Christian miracles. At this day, on the contrary, not only (with very rare exceptions) those who are regarded as leaders of thought among us — such as Martineau in England and Hedge in America — have quietly dropped or openly discarded the argument from miracles; but Broad Churchmen in England, like Bishop Colenso, who never forfeited his bishopric, like Rev. Charles Voysey and Stopford Brooke (before the secession of these latter), have done the same; Matthew Arnold, openly a member of the Church of England, says without rebuke that “miracles do not happen.” The way for this remarkable change of opinion among men in general has no doubt been opened by scientific habits of thinking; but, as a change in *religious* opinion, the way for it had to be prepared by philosophy. Schleiermacher, as usual, speaks both ways: “Insulate any natural fact,” he says, “and it becomes a miracle; repeat any miracle, and it becomes a natural fact.” And, for a time, the religious scruple is pacified by such a compromise.

Clear and honest thinking, however, demands something more than this tampering with words. It demands, first, a fixed habit of mind in harmony with the best opinion or knowledge of the day: this we call a *philosophical method* in our thought;



and, second, a careful study, with the best helps of modern learning, of the documents and evidences of our faith: this we call *a scientific criticism* in our theology. I have just spoken of the great change that has come to pass in the opinions of the thinking world, in the common understanding of the Bible history. I have now a few words to say of the way in which this change has been helped amongst ourselves by the study of German critical theology.

To go into the subject properly, I ought to show how there have grown up, in Germany, more or less directly as the fruit of different philosophical schools, a great variety of interpretations, or ways of interpreting the Bible records, most of them more or less rationalistic; and how these may be divided into three main groups: the non-miraculous, pure and simple, represented by the name of Paulus; the mythical or poetic, represented by Strauss; and the historical or scientific, of which the best exponent is the school of Baur. Now the story of these groups is extremely interesting and instructive, but I have not time to give it here;<sup>1</sup> and, besides, my subject seems to make it more proper for me to illustrate it by examples taken among our own students and theologians, instead of those that come to us across the water in a foreign tongue.

Strictly speaking, there has been no scholarly investigation of this field amongst ourselves. The best that any of our students have done has been

<sup>1</sup> It is given in "Christian History in its Three Great Periods," vol. iii. pp. 227-238.

to study according to their ability, and appropriate as far as they thought good, the learning which has been poured forth in unstinted measure from the German press. German has for this half-century been the favorite, I may say the indispensable, language in which to follow up any of these lines of investigation. And, whether our own writers have borrowed their opinions out and out, or whether they have thought them out for themselves under the atmospheric pressure of that great world of learning and speculation, the result is one: the general, even the popular, way of looking at the subject, with or without knowing it, has taken its tone from Germany.

The earliest signs of this influence among us were an essay on "The Messianic Prophecies," by Mr. (afterwards Professor) George R. Noyes, in 1834; critical "Lectures on the Old Testament," by Professor Palfrey, published in 1840; and a "Note on the Old Testament," by Professor Norton, in 1844. These, however, though expressing the extreme of radical opinion in their day, were addressed only to scholars, and hardly reached the general mind; then, too, they did not directly touch the Christian records, and so excited little or no particular alarm. The first book I remember, showing clear traces of German influence upon critical opinion, — less by its argument than by the fact of its publication, — was a tale called "Theodore, or the Skeptic's Conversion," translated by James Freeman Clarke from the learned and famous theologian De Wette. Theodore is an ingenuous young theologian, beginning to be



troubled with doubts of the supernatural, — a sort of Robert Elsmere of that period, whose spiritual struggles are mild, indeed, compared with those of a later day, and who easily finds comfort in such pious compromises as those we have seen in Schleiermacher. There could not have been a gentler or kindlier introduction among us of the line of thought which controversy was to make so familiar afterwards. De Wette was one of the earliest, one of the most devout and pure-minded, as well as most copious and learned, of the new school of commentators; and his writings, though long left behind by the rushing current of speculative exegesis, did perhaps more than any others to instruct the students of that generation.

It is natural to speak next of the work of Theodore Parker, whose chief task of erudition was to translate and expound, from his immense range of reading, De Wette's commentary on the Old Testament. He had already, in his South Boston sermon on "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" (1841), cast these topics of learned discussion into the waters of popular controversy; and his name, more than any other, came to be the watchword of the change of opinion that was slowly coming to pass upon the popular mind: a change which was strikingly shown three years ago this month, when the American Unitarian Association published a large volume of Theodore Parker's writings, including that very discourse, under the editorship of James Freeman Clarke.

Two other Unitarian scholars, especially revered

and beloved among us, have shown in different ways and more obscurely something of the German influence in their commentaries upon the Gospel, — Dr. William Henry Furness and Mr. Edmund Hamilton Sears. “Jesus and his Biographers,” which is the completest and best statement of Dr. Furness’s exposition, recognizes with extreme gratitude and respect his obligation to his instructor Professor Norton; but its characteristic view — that the miracles, taken in their most literal sense, were *the natural acts* of such a soul as Jesus — not only was a great shock to the received opinion, but no one can read the rationalistic commentary of Paulus, without seeing how the two differ in their method only by a hair’s-breadth, and how (consciously or not) the one has caught the manner and spirit of the other whom apparently he means to contradict. They have the same matter-of-fact way of taking the detail of narrative and of giving it a “natural” explanation, each in his own fashion. Allow for the thick, clumsy, dingy, ill-printed German volumes, and set beside them the fair, clean, trim, compact pages of the American press, — compare the scholastic method of the German erudite, who chiefly rejoices and expands in the dry light of criticism, with the religious beauty and tenderness that mark the later exposition, — and you have in the one, in many a familiar passage, only a transfigured likeness of the other. Mr. Sears’s “Heart of Christ,” I should say on the other hand, with perhaps a little less confidence, reflects, in the great sweetness and spiritual beauty of its

exposition, the tone of Olshausen, that most devout and mystical of learned commentators, whose orthodoxy of belief seems purely a phase of his sentimental piety, and whose spirit is wonderfully winning as you begin to read him, whether or not you are long content with his intellectual view. Mr. Sears's refined and beautiful intelligence was the gracious channel through which that vein of influence flowed in, to the delight and comfort of many a kindred mind.

I do not know of any theologian among us who has accepted seriously Strauss's mythical theory of interpreting the gospel narrative. It was taken up by Theodore Parker, while it was yet new, in the "Christian Examiner," in an admirable exposition and confutation; and I do not remember any discussion of it as a living issue among us since. In brief, it would make the supernatural parts of the Gospels a sort of allegory, or philosophical poem, founded on ideas current in Jewish tradition, and embodying in symbols certain facts and phases of the higher life of man. Especially such transcendental facts of the Gospel narrative as the Incarnation, the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the Resurrection and Ascension, are expounded frankly as "myths," — that is, philosophical ideas, or facts of the religious life, put in the form of narrative of real events, which are regarded as purely symbolic or allegorical. It is understood to be the product of what is called the school of Hegel "of the Left" in philosophy; and, if one wishes to see how that general line of symbolic interpretation is carried

out through the field of fact and dogma, he might be advised, instead of studying the words of Strauss himself (which are foreign in tone, and more or less repellent to us), to find it in the writings of Drs. Hedge and Everett before cited, especially the former.

Of far greater importance at this day than the schools of criticism yet spoken of is what is known as the "Tübingen School," established and still largely controlled by the massive learning and masterly mind of Ferdinand Christian Baur. I have myself several times given public exposition of the method of this school and the results it seems to lead to, and shall say nothing of it now, except that it has been most fully, most intelligently, and best set forth before our public by that graceful scholar, that widely read theologian, that accomplished man of letters, Octavius Brooks Frothingham, — a man who inherits the elegant and fastidious refinement of our elder New England scholarship, and has added to it an intellectual breadth, a moral courage, and a mental vigor which put him conspicuously in the front rank of a younger school of theologians.<sup>1</sup>

I have now, as time allowed me, passed in review the influences, both religious and dogmatic or intellectual, which have come upon American Unitarianism during the last fifty years, while I have been

<sup>1</sup> When these words were spoken, Mr. Frothingham was by my side; and the response they called forth must have convinced him, gratefully, how little the noble independence of his career had estranged him from the affection and honor of his earlier associates.

a close and interested spectator in the field. There is one other thing which seems to me necessary, in order to make this survey complete. I have said already what were the dismay and repugnance with which that influence was first seen to be coming on. To quote from Professor Norton's address on "The Latest Form of Infidelity": "In Germany the theology of which I speak has allied itself with atheism, with pantheism, and with other irreligious speculations, that have appeared in those metaphysical systems from which the God of Christianity is excluded." Some of you may no doubt remember when the very name German was a sort of reproach, and any suspicion of that line of speculation was a stigma from which it was not easy for the young theologian to get absolved. Yet you have also lived to see one who as a young theologian most eagerly and with warmest sympathy followed that line of speculation, come nearer perhaps than any other man of education among us to the common thought and heart; for, when I recall those early influences, I seem to find the popular embodiment of them all in James Freeman Clarke.

Again, it seems to me clear that the life of religious thought which has come down to us survives not in spite of, but in virtue of, those influences I have attempted to describe. I do not mean that the opinions of the present day are in better harmony with the true religious life than those which prevailed fifty years ago. I do not think they are. At any rate, it is not for us to disparage that body of opinion which stayed the religious life of Chan-



ning, Tuckerman, and Henry Ware. What I do mean is, that to have shut down the gates against an intellectual tide so genuine and strong as was then setting in, would have been to turn what till then had been an open channel into a little land-locked creek, and to shut us out effectually from the large intellectual currents of our age. The alternative in that case would have been to strand in dry-rot, or to effect a breach by violence into the wider waters. There were those then who were willing to do either: Norton the one thing, Parker the other thing. But all of us, I think, are now agreed that the more excellent way was that taken by the younger scholars of that day,—Furness, Hedge, and Clarke being conspicuous in the group,—who set themselves to deepen the channel and keep it open, and won for us who follow them the free navigation of the sea.

And this service of theirs turned, as you will have seen, upon the same point which Schleiermacher made the pivot of his first appeal to the German people: I mean his assertion that the religious life—with all there is in it of beauty and joy, of comfort, aspiration, strength, and hope—is its own evidence and its own exceeding great reward; and, while it is not without intellectual foundation of its own, is yet independent of all form, of speculative opinion. It was (humanly speaking) of infinite importance for us at that time that this conviction should be well established. Doubtless it has had the ill effect of making some men loose, reckless perhaps, about holding firmly any clear

conviction at all about anything. But it has had the good effect, with very many more in whom opinion was wavering, to hold them still within the blessed circle of Christian fellowship, till character should be ripened, principle braced, and the mental tone invigorated. Thus it has quickened and refreshed the springs of spiritual life in the veins of our religious organization itself.

Besides, as we must remember, the opinions then most dreaded — opinions touching the supernatural and miraculous in the ministry of Jesus — were not opinions invented by theologians, however radical. On the contrary, the most radical of theologians used every art of forced interpretation, of evasion, and of intellectual compromise, to escape the pressure of those opinions. If the old doctrinal view of the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection, and the miraculous works of Jesus has in any mind been weakened, dissolved, or washed away, it has been not by the theology which first exhausted every shift to save it, but by the science which in a pitiless flood beat and encroached upon it, in spite of those poor makeshifts. Within these fifty years many of us have had thrust upon us, again and again, first-hand testimony from believers of facts as distinctly miraculous as anything in the New Testament, — facts which one or two hundred years ago would just as distinctly have received that interpretation; yet we know perfectly well that such testimony, however vouched, would not stand an hour in any civilized court of justice, and so we quietly lay it by, whatever be our private



opinion of its validity. It is just so with treatment of the miracles of the New Testament. Thousands among us receive them with the same faith, comfort, and reverence as of old. But not one of us thinks of defining the line of Christian fellowship by the acceptance of them; not one of us would stake a single point of his own religious faith upon them; not one of us appeals to them as argument for the spiritual truth, but at most as what that "truth as it is in Jesus" may help us to accept.

This change in the general intelligence has come about, reluctantly and with infinite protest, during the entire scientific revolution of the last two centuries. It has not been frankly accepted, among those calling themselves Christians, till comparatively late in the fifty years' period we have been looking back upon. But it had to reach not our scientific opinions merely, but our religious opinions. If the religious life survives among us in spite of it, this result is due, in no small part, to the influence upon our elder Unitarianism of German theology from the time of Schleiermacher.

### III.

#### FORTY YEARS LATER.

**I**N the course which comes to an end to-night,<sup>1</sup> you have been studying one of those large movements of the human mind, whose advance is measured not by years, but by centuries. The line of thought you have followed reaches back something more than five hundred years. Certainly, it is a new heaven and a new earth that have come into view, since the slow and painful dissolution began, of that great structure which we call the Catholic civilization of the Middle Age, — a new heaven, revealed in the system of Copernicus, or through the telescope of Galileo; a new earth, whose law of development, long foreshadowed, comes to be more clearly seen, by Darwin's and Spencer's help, in these last thirty years.

And this change in the world's outward aspect is but a type of the more radical revolution in men's religious thought, — a revolution far costlier in conflict, tears, and blood. Its march is not a holiday journey, but a campaign. Its victories are won by hard and painful strokes. The campaign is not always bloodless. It has not only its solitary vic-

<sup>1</sup> An Address delivered before the Brooklyn Association for Moral and Spiritual Education, May 30, 1886.

tims, like Giordano Bruno, burnt alive in Rome for his gospel of free-thinking ; but its martyr hosts, as the Huguenots and the English Puritans, who died in the hope of founding a free religious commonwealth. And, no doubt, the way will even yet be rough and painful, to us or to our children, before the present movement will have its fruit in a fully recovered harmony between men's knowledge and their faith. It is well to think of our subject thus at starting, in its severer and more heroic aspect ; and to feel that we ourselves have volunteered (not, let us hope, quite unworthily) in the service which it indicates of our common humanity.

That march of thought you have sought to interpret, stage by stage, as it has borne upon those two chief interests of men's life, their morals and their religion. A march — in this present view of it — of five centuries, that began out of great obscurity, and has been followed with slow and hard-won steps. As it emerges in these latter days into a clearer field, we have a better understanding of what it is, and whither it is tending. It is to this later phase of it, for about a century back, that we give, in particular, the name "liberal movement ;" and you have asked me to attempt some exposition of the point it has come to, and the aspect it presents to-day.

I am glad, and a little proud, to have this task assigned me. But, as I come to take it up, I find myself in a mood which I should like to explain in advance. For, I must confess, it does not prove so plain and easy a business as I might have hoped.

The earlier phases of this movement, indeed, it is comparatively easy to interpret, as they settle into shape and take their place in history. We are well away from the passion and turmoil that beset them once. We think of them now as steps in an evolution determined in advance by the very nature of human thought and life. We feel nothing of the dread and horror the Reformers felt at the mighty genius of papal Rome, that had created and for a thousand years controlled the Catholic Empire of the West. We calmly balance the right and wrong of the conflict waged against it by the valiant, heroic, austere, and domineering creed which gives a lurid glory to the name of Calvin. We look back, it may be, with easy indifference to the sectarian controversies of sixty years ago, in which the dearest interests of mankind seemed then to be at stake. We embark, with an easy confidence, on that widening and gracious stream, which bears in its bosom the literature, the science, and the philosophic thought of our nineteenth century; and these, by their blending with our religious thought, make the very definition of what we know as Liberalism. So far, our view is quite clear and undisturbed. But when we come square up to the hour in which we live and speak, and try to interpret that, we feel a sudden arrest. The abrupt challenge of that question — What is, after all, the aspect and the promise of this very moment of time? — must give us pause. The scientific phase we talk of, indeed, quite confidently; but of the social phase, which envelops and controls the scientific, who knows what symp-

toms may open on us unawares, this very coming month ?

One may be pardoned at twenty-five for feeling very sure of the way he is going, and very sure that the great world is going the same way too. Looking as he does with one eye — the eye of hope — through a narrow tube, his vision is more keen than wide. Well for him that it is so ! I do not know how he should ever have courage to face the future, which makes the field where he must walk and work, if he had to see in advance all that he will look back on with the eye of experience before his work is done. Well for him that that future shows to him in the color of his own hope ! His aim in life (we will suppose) is ideal and intellectual, not mercenary and base. In that temper, he easily finds things as he wants to find them. Faith furnishes forth the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Thus, “Your young men shall see visions ;” and this, as Lord Bacon tells us, is life’s contrast against that dim, remote, uncertain glance upon the future, hinted in the phrase that follows : “Your old men shall dream dreams,” — knowing, alas ! that they are dreams, whose real being is of the past.

But the pardon found so easily at twenty-five will not be given him if forty years later he has only the same sanguine confidence, if he still finds the situation as clear and easy to be interpreted as he thought it then. Life has brought him in sharp collision with facts and forces, whose existence he had hardly begun to suspect. The “stream of

tendency," whose course he thought so smooth and certain, turns out to be a turbulent flood, whose twisting eddies perplex his bearings as he tosses and spins upon its surface. Those forty years will have brought to the front many a revolution of opinion, many a political upheaval, the eclipse of many a shining reputation, many a social change wrought through blind passion, and involving unforeseen events. They will, further, have brought such advance and widening-out of general knowledge as to make the visible sphere he moves in quite another, a wider, a more bewildering thing. His thought moves painfully and slow amid the new surroundings. He envies and admires, it may be, the alacrity with which younger minds find free play in a scene that to him grows dim and unfamiliar. He begins to feel that a younger hand must take and carry forward that torch of truth on which his grasp is slackening. He is less hardy and single-minded in his view, not because he has less faith, but because he knows more things. He sees more widely than he did, and so sees not so far or sharply in one direction as he thought he did. And his opinion is likely to be the calm assent that *this is so upon the whole*, rather than the ardent assertion that *this is surely so, and cannot be otherwise*.

Now I stand, in comparison with some of you, at the end of that term of forty years; and I stand in something of that attitude of disadvantage. And, to simplify the task you have given me, I must begin by narrowing down my view: not try



to span the wide horizon, but to look understandingly at one or two things that lie very near. Thus the present aspect of the liberal movement ought by right to include a great deal that I cannot so much as touch upon. Hardly a hint, for example, of those most interesting and kindred phases of it among the leaders of liberal thought in England; still less the later aspects of German learning and speculation, or the instructive criticism that comes from the universities of Holland, or those rare, precious, and heroic strivings after a liberal theology that appear here and there—in France especially, but also in Italy and even Spain—in the field so long given over to bitter conflict between the spiritual despotism of Rome and blank materialistic unbelief flaming out now and then in hot revolutionary hate. All these would be needed, to fill out an adequate picture of our time, taken from the point of view you have assigned me. But I am afraid that a sketch so wide and ambitious would be ineffective and thin. It is an ungrateful task to summarize a volume in the limits of a half-hour's essay. And because you have applied to me, who have spent these forty years, and more, in living contact with certain special phases of the liberal movement, and not in a far-away study of it as a whole, I shall deal with only that part of the wide field in which I have been an interested eyewitness, and in a small way a worker. It is only with that small segment of our subject that I propose to deal; only there, if anywhere, my word can be of any use.



Taking this point of view, then, I shall briefly trace some lines of comparison between the present and earlier stages of the liberal movement in these three respects,—its temper, its thought, and its aim; and with this I shall mingle as I may some consideration of those practical aspects of it most plainly bearing upon the future.

I. And first, as I look back upon that lapse of time, I do not seem to find liberalism so light of heart as forty years ago. Nay, I easily fancy that then the world itself was younger, and the spirit of the time was younger, as well as we who were living our youth then. Grave events, cruel disappointments, some of the darkest tragedies of history, have stamped their mark upon this period of time. How easily and how eagerly the human heart looks for the present coming of an age of gold! How heavy and quick the shadow falls upon that fair vision! Some of you may recall the glow of hope that greeted the revolutions of 1848, that year of wonders, whose promise of liberty and peace was followed so soon by such thunderstorms and shocks of war. That type shows us in the world of politics what we so often find in the world of morals and thought. It seems impossible that with anybody the view of things should be so roseate and cheerful now as it was with almost everybody then. Our time, in comparison with that, looks anxious, critical, and full of doubt. It is a long way from the serene gospel according to Emerson, in which all the higher faiths are taken for granted, to the labored theistic

arguments which are the last product of the Concord School. It is a long way from the easy optimism that explored with so confident touch our chief social horrors, drunkenness, slavery, vice, and crime, to that sterner mood in which we live, tempered by the fire and blood of civil war, or taught by the slow revolution in society and the State that has been proceeding since. It is a long way from that fair Arcadia of Brook Farm, with its harmless socialistic theories and its amiable but rather futile idealizing of daily toil, to the obstinate labor-battles of this last month, and the red-handed, death-dealing anarchism of Chicago.

The first aspect, then, in which the liberal movement presents itself to my mind at this time, is the contrast that it shows to the easy and optimistic idealism of forty years ago. Looked at externally, the change is a little saddening. But if we look to the temper of mind that meets it, we find that it is a healthy and a promising change. The manly and brave temper is that which chooses to look facts in the face and see the worst of them, rather than brood upon them in the illusive glow of utopian dreams. Anything like advance to a better knowledge of the situation is had by dealing first-hand with the facts of human nature, including its malign and dangerous passions as well as its radiant possibilities. That, I think, is more the temper of liberalism in our day than it was forty years ago. Those darker facts of men's life, those evil passions of the mind, are what religionists of earlier time hated and fought against as

enemies of God, desiring to see their face openly. And in this regard, we have better understanding than earlier liberals had of the heroic side of that elder faith.

For, in its first form, religious liberalism is simply a movement away from the creeds and institutions of the past, with the heavy bondage they laid upon the human spirit, toward the breadth, the freedom, the wealth of the world's larger life. The fresh consciousness of this is a keen sense of emancipation, it is the joy of a new-found liberty. Deliverance from the ancient terror,—terror before the inexorable Judge whom theologians have depicted; terror of devils that assailed the soul in all unguarded hours; terror of the eternal hell, whose fiery torment has so been held out before the naked conscience; terror at the thought of blasphemy in casting off beliefs that have grown to be flat unreason, while the mind yet shrinks from looking its honest thought in the face, —deliverance from that manifold "terror of the Lord" is enough, at first, to fill the soul with a great joy. It seems, for the time, as if it were alone ample to supply the fulness of the religious life. Only leave that vague dark dread behind, and the whole soul is flooded with kindly light.

That is the first flush of feeling in the new emancipation; and that was, very largely, the spirit of the younger liberalism with which we compare our own. It was as if we had abolished those dark facts of life, of which the old dogma was but the symbol; as if there were no longer any such thing

as depravity in human nature, when we had once denied the dogma of its innate corruption; as if there were no divine wrath that blazed against wrongdoing, when once we had got over our dread of a future hell. A radiant humanity found nothing anywhere but good. Misery and pain, it thought, were to be banished at a word out of the conditions of men's lives. Ah! but it forgot that chaos and horror of men's passions which have furnished from the beginning the imagery, the apprehension, and the foretaste of eternal doom.

We have learned, too, that religion itself, as a power in the soul, is its own joy and exceeding great reward. Here, too, we have come into better understanding of the ancient creed. With all its narrowness and error, we still see that while it was honestly and bravely held, it brought to its adherents an heroic temper to fight stoutly as the Lord's champions in the battle against wrong. It brought, too, great gladness of heart and a peace which passed understanding, from the mere fact that it was a religion,—that it meant the surrender of the soul to that which was worshipped as highest, holiest, best. That heroism remained, that joy and peace remained, of the faith that had been as the soul of goodness in an evil creed.

At least, if it did not remain, we have learned better to understand its loss; for the old foes have been about us with new faces. And, in these forty years since the early flush of our newly emancipated liberalism, there is not so much to boast of our own better success in dealing with those old foes as to

give us any very complacent sense of the superiority of our ways over the former ways. And so the present temper of liberalism is soberer, more modest of itself, less apt and confident in its claim, less proud of its achievement; and it is well for us that it is so.

II. The second aspect of the liberal movement now, in comparison with forty years ago, is that it seeks a scientific rather than a sentimental, mystic, or idealistic expression of itself. Any movement of religious thought implies these two things. It aims, first, to state with authority what is the deepest ground of trust and the most imperative law of conduct: that is the sphere of personal religion, dealing with the individual heart and conscience. It aims, secondly, to train and stimulate the intelligence, by setting forth, both to the mind and imagination, the largest and most general view we are able to get of the universe and of human life in its broadest relations: that is the sphere of religion intellectually, dealing with the speculative understanding. Now, regarding the former, I do not see that religion as a spiritual force in men's lives has changed in the least from what it was when the Vedic Hymns or the Hebrew Psalms or the tragedies of Æschylus were composed. Life brings men face to face, now as then, with the same great wonder and glory of the heavens, with the same stormy passions or gentler affections of the heart, with the same bitter experiences of pain and grief and guilt, with the same dark problem and mystery of the human lot. As to either of these, I do not see that our attitude, morally regarded, has changed at all



since the earliest time of recorded thought. The only solution to the enigma of life, as it touches us personally, is that which consists in the reconciliation of heart and conscience to the conditions of *each man's particular lot in life*. The key of this reconciliation is found, now as ever, in the words "obedience and trust and help." These words have to do with life itself, not with our thoughts about life; their meaning is to the heart, not to the understanding; the method they indicate is the method not of science, but of faith. By that method, and by that alone, we are able to solve the problem of life practically, which we can never solve theoretically. That practical solving of it is what we call salvation. Toward any speculative solution of it, I am unable to see that science or philosophy has advanced us a single step.

Now, it is just within these forty years that science has made its most brilliant effort, and seems to have all but fulfilled its promise, to do that very thing. Consider, for a moment, the change that has come about in our mental habit. Forty years ago the most advanced religious thinking was purely of the type known as transcendental; that is, it was speculation upon data and postulates furnished by the religious sentiment. The three great words which more than any other marked the advent and set the key of that phase of the liberal movement were spoken in Emerson's "Nature" in 1836, his appeal to the "American Scholar" in 1837, and his Divinity School Address in 1838. The last two of these I heard as they were spoken; and — though

dimly and confusedly, out of my deep ignorance — I felt with a sense I can yet recall the breath and pulse of the new era then opening upon us. And I do not yet see that that fresh inspiration has lost its charm or its power or its use.

But, as soon as we think of what now appeals to our chief intellectual interest, we find ourselves in another atmosphere, — chill, gray, and bracing, when we compare it with that warmth and glow. We have lost the secret of that willing and radiant faith. We yield belief only where fact has had the verification of scientific tests; we feel assured only where experience has bodied forth the meaning of the word. Thus the great and certain verities of the religious life, as they were then thought of, — God, Freedom, and Immortality, — we submit to tests which no one demanded then, and bestow upon them interpretations which no one would have admitted then. Theories of the universe, which formerly were purely speculative or religious, — the origin of the visible heavens, the development of life upon our planet, the law of the Providence that rules in human history; theories of life, dealing with the laws of health, the laws of character, the laws of sanity, the laws of population, wealth and poverty, the laws of crime, — are constructed on scientific data and dealt with by scientific methods. For providential rule, we have the law of evolution; for the “sacred history” of our younger days, we have the study of “comparative religions,” which becomes as mere a branch of human science as that of comparative philology; and so with all the rest.



This, I say, is the change which has come about within the recollection of some of us, marking strongly one present aspect of the liberal movement. On the whole, it is better to welcome this phase of our religious thought, and make the best of it, than to criticise or vituperate it as Carlyle and Ruskin have done so bitterly.<sup>1</sup> But we may say of it that it attempts too much. Take the two phrases most commonly in use to express the conscious attitude of men's thought toward the highest of intellectual problems, — "a Scientific Theism" and "the Idea of God," — and I think we may say of both of them that, so far as it is a religious theism we mean, and not merely a cosmic speculation, it goes before our premises, it underlies our processes, and makes a supplement to our deductions: like Newton's "Scholium" at the end of his *Principia*, which gives an eloquent statement of his own belief, but was certainly not proved by his differential calculus. So the form of theistic argument most familiar to us at this day may be regarded as the cropping out of a conviction implanted by a devout Christian training rather than a logical deduction from the premises that have been assumed. And the result, upon the whole, we may find to be this: that religion, with its implicit faiths, abides as a primary element

<sup>1</sup> Thus from Mr. Ruskin: "I know of nothing that has been taught the youth of our time, except that their fathers were apes and their mothers winkles; that the world began in accident and will end in darkness; that honor is a folly, ambition a virtue, charity a vice, poverty a crime, and rascality the means of all wealth and the sum of all wisdom. Both Mr. Carlyle and I knew perfectly well all along what would be the outcome of that education."

in human nature ; that it must be accepted, where it is accepted at all, on its own merits, and not on those of any logic ; that natural science must waive the attempt to solve that problem of the universe which has proved beyond the grasp of speculative philosophy. Thus we learn that the true province of Religion must be experience and duty of the life that now is, not vain strivings to fathom the Eternal and Unknown ; and the true province of Science will be to explain not the ultimate ground of things, or the primary motive of right and duty, but the real conditions under which men's work on earth may be more effectually done.

III. And so we come to a third aspect of the liberal movement, more characteristic and more full of powerful appeal to our hope and fear than either of the others. I mean, that the questions it raises are not those of theory, but of life, — questions of ethics and questions of social order. There is a singular consent, all along the line, in turning away from interests merely speculative, and facing the problems of human life. Not merely that societies for "ethical culture" take the place of societies professedly religious ; not merely that greater attention is given, in pulpits and religious journals, to the social questions of the day ; but that, with multitudes, their real religion, the only religion they pretend to know, is that which deals with secular concerns and is inspired with secular passion. A man's religion is that which makes to him the ideal thing in life ; that which he believes in so heartily that he holds any other gain, or life itself, cheap in

comparison with it. Thus, that which makes a nihilist or an anarchist ready to suffer and die for his horrible creed is the same religious frenzy that inspires a cannibal war-dance, and that made the priests of Baal howl aloud and gash themselves with knives. The fervent passion of a "Nationalist," whose true religion is Ireland, is the same thing with the Messianic passion of the Jews, which after ages have exalted into a symbol, and made the central fact of religious history. The creed of Calvin, for which men freely fought and bled three hundred years ago, has faded to a mere chimera; it is no longer a genuine religion — that is, a flaming and dominant passion of the human heart — with anybody in our day. What has come to take its place is not the serene platitudes of a speculative theology; not the "cosmic theism" or the "scientific theism" which builds itself up, as an intellectual deduction, upon the foundations of modern knowledge. It is rather the keen interest, the patient service, the sacrifice of personal indulgence, the spirit kindling to moral enthusiasm and a passion of self-devotion, that drafts and enlists men as loyal champions in the battle for right, for truth, for human welfare. Just in proportion as the fires of old controversy fade, as the mind falls back, baffled and weary, from its search after the infinite and unknowable, just in that proportion the faith and zeal, of which the human heart has shown itself capable, come to be devoted to that attainable ideal which in pious phrase we call the Kingdom of God upon earth.

At least, that great hope which lays hold upon the future, even (we may say) the possibility of any religion at all for mankind in the coming time, seems to depend on the vital reality of that phase in our movement which is ethical and social. It has nothing to do with denial of or indifference toward those sublimer conceptions, — a Living God as the soul of things, and Immortal Life as the inspiration of men's hope: on the contrary, the more vividly these are conceived, the deeper and surer the motive of that service of humanity. But "pure religion and undefiled," as James says, consists in that very service, not in any dreams or speculations or opinions of men. And, of that liberal movement we are studying, the most hopeful aspect is that it has entered upon that phase.

It were a waste of time to cite here the innumerable illustrations that appear in every channel where there is the least activity of religious thought. But our business is with that which is properly included in "the liberal movement." Wherever, indeed, those human feelings and motives have colored the exposition of religion, there we find a liberalism of heart wider than any creed and embracing many. But it has often happened that religious thinkers, professedly liberal, have been the pioneers and the shapers-out of work taken up then and pushed by other hands. Such work may be semi-secular, like education and prison-reform, which got their first great impulse so; or it may be purely humanitarian and moral. I have just received from that veteran leader in religious liberalism, Francis William New-

man, now just closing his eighty-first year, — a man whose singular intellectual candor and restless activity of thought go along with an equal fervor of spirit touching all human needs, — a pamphlet in which he sets forth, with more than youthful ardor of conviction, the five “new crusades” of our own day against five gross evils of modern society, — slavery, now happily extinct; drunkenness, screened by statute right and fostered by executive favor; the shelter of vice under laws especially offensive and insulting to women; that special horror of great capitals assailed by the White Cross League; and the enormous guilt of war as a recognized court of appeal for nations. In all these — and just as much in the peril that comes with the new conditions of modern industry, the distress and alarm of the great labor-battle, the “red terror” of social anarchy, the chronic task of disinfecting our party politics — we see the need both of the severe, calm guidance of the scientific spirit, and of a deep religious devotion of the heart to human welfare.

These things, and such as these, are in our day the special tasks of “the Religion of Humanity.” It is in keeping with the spirit of our liberal movement from the beginning, that practical and not theoretical interests should be its main concern; that it should more and more become an ethical and social, not a speculative movement; that its learning shall not degenerate to pedantry, or its higher culture to diletantism; that its science shall be turned from being a mere minister of material gain, or a mere method and illustration of barren meditation



upon the universe, into a help and a guide for the effectual working-out of those most necessary tasks.

These, then, appear to me the most instructive aspects of the liberal movement, as it has come down to us, to be guided by our hands: 1. An increasing seriousness of temper, as compared with the buoyant optimism of forty years ago; 2. The clearer recognition and acceptance of the method of science, as compared with that of pure sentiment and speculation; 3. The attempting of positive tasks, or the study of positive problems of ethics, especially of social ethics, instead of resting content in the intellectual joy and pride of discovery of truth, or emancipation from mental error. Into this large and generous and real and consecrated liberalism, it is (as we may trust) our great privilege to have at length arrived.



## IV.

### FREDERIC HENRY HEDGE.

**D**R. HEDGE'S grandfather, Lemuel Hedge, was a country minister in Warwick, Massachusetts, a stout Loyalist in the time of the Revolution, whose patriot neighbors made life a burden to him in consequence. To the eldest of his six boys there fell, as by birthright, the privilege of going to college, while a sturdy younger son, Levi, of stronger brain and hand, was apprenticed to a master mason; but at the age of twenty, or thereabout, laying down brick and trowel, resolutely won his way to the only higher education then known, and became a professor of logic and metaphysics in Harvard College, and the father of our eminent theologian and teacher, the subject of this sketch. The son kept in his mind a pretty image of his maternal grandmother, daughter of President Holyoke of Harvard, whom tradition pictured as a bright young girl, standing on an insulated stool and holding an electric chain, while she offered her laughing lip in challenge to whatever daring youth should advance to touch. Experimental science was young and gay in those good days! A great-uncle on the same side was Edward Augustus Holyoke, a physician of Salem, who died in 1829 at something over the age

of one hundred,—a man of methodical ways, addicted to scientific observation, and of a repute in his profession which, I suppose, gave to his young relative, who knew him, the feeling, which he never quite outgrew, that in choosing another path he had forsaken his own true vocation.

Of such parentage and antecedents Frederic Henry Hedge was born, on the 12th of December, 1805, two years younger than Emerson, three years younger than Furness, his two nearest life-long friends. Of his school days little can be known, since his scholarly calling was declared so early that, as he has told me, he never had a purer delight in letters than in committing to memory, at seven, the *Eclogues* of Virgil in the original, and at ten he knew by heart long passages of Homer in Greek. This means that he could have had no companions in study, and no class rivalry to cramp or cheer. But a young man of uncommon genius and scholarship, George Bancroft, then in college, became an inmate of the father's family, and tutor to the boy; and it shows in the father a singular confidence in both, that, when the boy was thirteen and the tutor a graduate of eighteen, they were sent together across the ocean to become, the one a student of philosophy, and the other a pupil in a classical school, in Germany, where, absolutely among strangers, he passed the next four years. I once persuaded him, when he had pleased himself for some weeks in recalling incidents of this period, to put them in the form of an autobiographical sketch. It was in the interval just before his grievous malady of the spring of

1887; and it was in a respite of that lingering torment that he gave me the few pages that follow — the only consecutive memorials that he has left behind, of a career in which there was so much of interest to tell : —

At the age of thirteen, having first been duly instituted in the mysteries of the German language at a private *pension*, I was put to school at a gymnasium in north Germany, situated in a romantic valley among the southward-stretching spurs of the Harz, permeated by a small stream fordable in summer, swelled to a roaring torrent by the melting snows of winter, and washing the base of the Herzberg, a mountain somewhat less than a thousand feet in height.

The school buildings, a congeries of quadrangles with other structures, including a church, had once been a monastery: the boys' rooms, stretching along two or three corridors, were the identical cells formerly occupied by the monks, rooms about ten feet square, with little bedrooms (*Kammern*) attached. They had stone floors and were heated by stoves, — one stove to every two rooms, the mouth opening on the corridor and closed by a lock of which the calefactor kept the key. Underneath the portion of the building inhabited by the officers and scholars was the crypt, lined with perpendicular tombstones, each faced with an effigy in relief of the sainted brother who slumbered beneath. Through this crypt the truant boy, admitted by the calefactor, who served as janitor, had to pass, with such courage as he might, when after dark the upper doors were closed. The school church was also the church of the *Flecken*, the small town that leaned to the cloister, though

governed by a magistrate of its own. The students with the teachers occupied the transept, the townspeople the nave.

My coming was awaited with much curiosity by the youths who were to be my fellow-students. They expected to see a copper-colored savage: they were met by a boy as white as the whitest of their own race, with no more of the savage than belongs to the boy in every clime.

And yet these fellows were acquainted with the history of this country, and could have passed a better examination concerning it than the average of American boys in those days. They knew that the people of the United States were English, not Indians. But such is the difference between book-knowledge and ideas practically appropriated and assimilated by the mind, and such was the glamour attending the word "America;" in the early years of this century, the geographical confusion of ideas respecting this somewhat extended continent is incredible. When about to leave Germany on my homeward journey, I was requested by a learned professor to make inquiry concerning his wife's brother who had emigrated to America: when last heard from, he was in Surinam.

My schoolmates gathered around the little stranger. They made much of me. The hazing usually practised on new-comers was forborne, instead of which, with true German *Wissbegier*, they assailed me with questions about tropical plants and tropical animals, as if all America lay in the torrid zone.

The staff of instructors consisted of the director, the rector, the conrector, three collaborators, and a French teacher of his own language, who resided in

the *Flecken*. The Director Brohm spoke English with ease, and was more inclined to grant my requests if I addressed him in that language.

The official intercourse between pupils and teachers, outside of the lecture-room or social communion, was conducted in Latin. For example, if a student wished to be excused from attendance on the exercises of the day, he *aegrotirte*, as we called it; that is, he pleaded illness, — it might be real or it might be shammed, — and on that ground wrote a letter addressed to all the teachers, to be circulated among them by our Mercury, the calefactor, on this wise:

Viri honoratissimi!

Ut mihi aegrotanti (*or ob capitis dolores, or purgandi causa*) hodie a lectionibus vestris abesse liceat rogo petoque.

*Signed by the student.*

But this privilege had its price. The *aegrotirende* must not leave the cloister, and must have no dinner but a plate of soup and a piece of dry bread. If he was really ill, what needed he more? If he shammed, let him take the consequences, which for a healthy boy with good appetite and love of muscular exercise might be supposed to counterbalance the satisfaction of idleness.

In like manner, sentence of punishment adjudged by a teacher was given in Latin. Of punishment there were three grades, — *Carenz*, loss of dinner, *Klosterarrest*, detention within doors, and *Carcerstrafe*, incarceration. Accordingly, the sentence would read: Schulz or Kurz *ob negligentiam*, or *ob contumaciam*, or, if the Latin for any particular offence did not come readily to mind, *ob causas sibi cognitatas, hodie prandio carebit*, or *per triduum ne coenobio exeat, or carceris poenam*



*subeat*. The *carcer*, or prison, was a room in the attic in which the student was locked up for one or two days, with tasks sufficient to occupy the solitary hours and prevent the morbid action of the mind.

The discipline, if superficially strict, was not searching and not quickening. Our rooms were visited several times each day, always twice in the evening, — once at nine, when the teacher whose turn it was came to our desks to see what we were doing, and again at eleven to see that we were in bed. On Sundays we were marshalled into church; but, once there, devout attention to the service, if expected, was certainly not enforced. A teacher in the opposite side of the transept was supposed to be watching us; but the inspection did not prevent our conversing freely or amusing ourselves with a novel, except in winter, when the bitter cold kept us in a state of torpor amounting almost to suspended animation. Such cold within doors I had never before experienced, and have never experienced since.

The gymnasium supplied us with two meals daily, one at noon and one at six P. M. We sat at long tables, each table presided over by one of the teachers. We were well served, and had no reason to complain of our fare, although complaints were not wanting. At the upper table one of the *Primaner* read aloud according to monastic tradition. But the books selected for that use were not works of monkish or any other theology: they were not chosen with a view to edification, but for entertainment solely, mostly works of fiction.

Our breakfasts we had to provide for ourselves out of our weekly pocket-money. Each student furnished himself with an apparatus for cooking with charcoal,



and with such table furniture as he could afford. The cooking was a pleasant occupation; but the washing of the vessels was an onerous business, not very rigorously discharged. Only when a cup became so encrusted as to seriously contract its capacity, it was found necessary to cleanse it for fresh deposits. Some of the boys became adepts in brewing coffee or chocolate, and invited others to test their proficiency in that useful art. A *Chocoladeschmaus* (chocolate feast) was a favorite entertainment, to which of a Sunday afternoon the knowing would ask their friends.

If the discipline was in some respects strict, it was variously relieved. Sometimes we were taken on a walk to the nearest city, about five miles distant, to see a play or an elephant. One of our teachers had a fancy for pyrotechnics, and gave us an occasional entertainment in that kind. Twice every year the students were allowed to give a ball, to which ladies within a circuit of ten miles were invited, but none of the other sex, the youths themselves officiating as partners. The dancing lasted all night, relieved at intervals by drinking of *bishop*<sup>1</sup> and other refection, which caused a good deal of *aegrotiren* on the following day. Indeed, if I remember rightly, the day succeeding the ball was decreed a holiday.

A marked peculiarity of this gymnasium was an organization of the students for self-government, independent of the teachers, and supposed to be unknown to them. Boys who had reached the age of sixteen, and who had spent a year and a half at the school, constituted a senate called the "Veterans." These exercised an absolute and undisputed sway over the

<sup>1</sup> A weak concoction of spirituous liquors.

younger portion. There was a written code of laws, to which each new-comer was required to sign his allegiance. He then received his cloister name, conferred by the veterans, — a *sobriquet* suggested by some personal peculiarity, to which he must respond when called by a senior, though not allowed in return to address a senior of a year's standing by the cloister name which that senior bore among his peers.

The code contained provisions for the protection of the weak against the oppression of his stronger mates. If a boy was bullied by another for whom he was physically no match, he had only to say to his persecutor, *Ich chasse Sie*, "I bid you leave me," and the intercourse between the two was stopped at once. For if, after that magic formula had been pronounced, the bully should continue his persecution, an appeal to the veterans would subject him to a sound thrashing. The non-intercourse between the two was usually of short duration, but could only be terminated by an offer of reconciliation by the *chasser*, who would say to the chassed, *Soll es wieder gut sein?* "Shall we be friends again?" If a student had been guilty of meanness, such, for example, as cheating at play or informing against a fellow-student, the veterans in council decreed that he be sent to Coventry, or, as the phrase now is, "boycotted," for a definite term. Whoever should speak to him during that period would be visited with the same penalty.

Boys under the age of twelve in Germany address each other with the second person singular, *du*; but the gymnasium brings a transition to adult speech. The gymnasiast is addressed and addresses his mates with the customary third person plural, *Sie*; but if two of these youngsters are smitten with a mutual liking,

they agree to use the more familiar second person singular: *Sollen wir uns du nennen?* I seemed to notice that such treaties of amity were most often formed when wine was circulating. But they survived the festive hour.

As an evidence of the democratic spirit which prevails in academic life, I may mention that, though many of the boys in this school were sons of noblemen, and some of them of the highest rank, no discrimination was made by pupil or teacher in favor of these high-born youths.

If the discipline, as I have said, was not quickening, neither was the instruction fructifying. For boys so young, it partook too much of the university method of teaching by lectures. Too little preparation was required of the pupil. Many of these, it is true, took notes of the lectures with all the assiduity so caustically recommended by Mephistopheles when he personates Faust in the play; but they were not examined on their notes, and the question of promotion to a higher class or detention in a lower was determined by no very rigorous test. For myself, I seem on looking back to have made but little progress while there, except in writing Latin, the one exercise that was rigorously enforced.

After nearly two years spent in this school, I was transferred to Schulpforte. And what a change! Schulpforte was then, as it is still, a Prussian institution, and manifested in its discipline, its vitality, its thoroughness, the care of the best government of modern time. It was a pet of that government, and was often visited by the minister of instruction in person. It lies on the Saale, about thirty miles from Leipsic and sixteen from Weimar. It constitutes a

community by itself, independent of any municipal control. The main building, or collection of attached buildings, including a church, like the other school had once been a monastery. Other detached edifices, among them the house of *Amtmann*, or purveyor, had sprung up around the central mass. An extensive playground, with bowling-alleys and gymnastic apparatus, formed part of the establishment. The whole was enclosed with a wall of a mile or more in circumference. This wall no one of the alumni proper was without special permission allowed to pass.

The term *alumni proper* requires explanation. For Prussian citizens, *Schulporte* was a free school. A limited number of Prussian youth were educated at the cost of the government. These were the alumni proper. They had no single rooms, but, when not in the class-rooms, were distributed through several spacious apartments, presided over by a senior who superintended their studies and gave them special instruction in addition to their class-work. At night they were lodged in large dormitories.

But, in addition to the Prussian alumni, the school was open to boys from other States, either German or foreigners, who were called *Köstgänger* (boarders). They were domesticated with the professors, and had rooms of their own or shared by a single chum, and paid for board and tuition. I had the good fortune to be boarded by Dr. Koberstein, who has written the most complete history of German literature. My chum was young Baron von Münchhausen, nephew of the veritable but unveracious story-teller of that name.

The staff of instructors consisted of a rector, a con-

rector, five professors, and four *adjuncti*, or tutors, — a considerably larger number of teachers than Harvard could boast in my college days. To these must be added the pastor, the physician, the *Kapellmeister*, or director of music, a drawing-master, a dancing-master, and in summer a swimming-master.

The course of study, though more effectively pursued, was much the same as in other gymnasia; but special attention was given to Greek composition and to Latin verses. As an illustration of the former, I may mention that a *Pförtner* translated Goethe's *Iphigenie* into Greek, of which translation a copy was presented to the poet by a committee chosen to wait upon him.

The making of Latin verses was one of the requirements of the semi-annual examination. The *materia poetica* was dictated in portions adjusted to the rank of each class. A *Primaner* had, I think, a hundred hexameters to exhibit. The one who accomplished this *Pensum* first signaled his triumph by ringing the great bell. This was done twice while I was there by Wilhelm Ranke, brother of the historian, who was also a graduate of Schulpforte.

Having gone so far, the tired hand stopped, and refused to take up the task again: once more it was holden "by a sort of fate." He commissioned me to do what I would with it, and even dictated a few sentences as a sort of sequel. The substance of them was that at Schulpforte his mind opened to a knowledge of what is meant by a life of thought and letters; and, above all, that "here I came to know Goethe." But an anecdote or two may serve to piece out the too fragmentary sketch. Thus it is



odd in this day to hear of his long walk in the country with his tutor, who would keep up his pupil's spirits by a glass of undiluted gin; and the tales are wonderful of the aptness of the more advanced students in their exercises of Latin verse; and he showed me once, in the "album" of those days (a portfolio of very modest engravings), the autograph of his school-friend and chum, Carl von Münchhausen, nephew and heir of that veracious traveller, the far-celebrated baron. Münchhausen was the better mathematician, and Hedge the better linguist, so that they were often helpful to each other in their school tasks; and it happened once that when the former was to be "confirmed" by the Lutheran rite, and was much put to it how to word his indispensable confession in Latin, the draft was truthfully and skilfully composed for him by his friend. Truly, one might say, a school-boy has not lived in vain, to whose lot it has fallen to write "the confessions of Baron Münchhausen"! A more serious event in this friendship befell, when the two agreed together to swim a somewhat powerful river. The Saxon boy was the sturdier, and came safely across, when turning he saw his companion the American gasping helpless in the stream, and just about to drown: he succeeded in dragging him out, quite unconscious; and, ignorant what to do, stretched him on the warm sand, where that and the sun's rays presently brought him back to life.

Returning to America at the end of 1822, he was first beguiled into a tedious boat-passage down the Elbe; then long kept in port by the sickness of the



captain of the poor little ship ; then, when the captain had died in Hamburg, was forced to put to sea with an incompetent mate for commander, to face a long and terrible winter voyage to New York. However, he was not conscious of the real danger, and remembered most distinctly the water famine when they were becalmed in the Gulf Stream and were reduced to a pint a day, and his effort to wash in water baled from the sea, which was too noisome and horrible to be touched, — this, with the overland journey home, when he had to trudge beside the stage-coach through the blocking snow-drifts of Worcester County. Little hints like these help fill out the picture of the cheery, sturdy, valiant lad of seventeen, fighting his way through such cold welcome to the home where his academic honors were to be won.

The date of his graduation at Harvard College, in the class of Charles Francis Adams and Horatio Greenough, in 1825, very nearly touches the high-water mark of that wave of intellectual enthusiasm which for the space of a generation identified the college with the best life of New England more closely than, probably, it has ever been before or since. The rise of that wave was first made plainly visible in the installation of President Kirkland in 1810 ; its flow included the college careers of Everett, Frothingham, Walker, Bancroft, and Emerson ; its shining crest was when, in 1824, Edward Everett, in his Phi Beta Kappa oration, paid eloquent homage to Lafayette as the guest of the nation and a hero of two worlds, — a moment which

is still looked back to, by living witnesses, as the most splendid in that period of their young pride and hope. It will be noticed that the character of this mental epoch was almost purely literary, rhetorical, or philosophic: of those just named, President Walker was the only one who gave his mind seriously to study the scientific method in its effect on the intellectual life; and he was by profession a theologian and moralist, not himself a man of scientific method as a thinker. All the best intellectual work of the period was shaped and toned by the exigencies of popular speech, rather than the severer logic of the Schools. Even grave chapters of history, theology, or metaphysics, in such hands, became a series of eloquent addresses rather than steps in a methodical essay. Even the severely disciplined mind of such a scholar as Dr. Hedge was at its best in the four or five noble orations which mark the culminating moments of his career; and his first public appearance in the field was as the poet of his class on Commencement Day.

After passing through the regular course of theological study, he was settled as minister of West Cambridge (now Arlington) in 1829. Here, in his six years' ministry, he developed by resolute discipline the mental habit that remained with him through life. A sturdy build, and a fibre tenacious rather than supple, marked the character of both mind and body. Alert and no way sluggish (that vice of scholars), he was a vigorous pedestrian till near the end of his days, and the strains of endurance he underwent in his various travelling experi-

ence were such as can rarely befall a man of letters in these days. But the daily life was that of a laborious student, — which means that he was capable of the physical strain of an amount of confinement to books which few men are equal to. And it means too, in his case, a very unusual strain of laborious and painstaking literary composition. The amount of mechanical labor in preparing for the pulpit was greater then than now; and, while exceptionally faithful in this task-work, he wrote always slowly and with effort. Quite in contrast with the swift and brilliant movement of his eminent contemporary and friend, Dr. Martineau, who in early days made himself master of shorthand, that his pen might keep pace with the electric rapidity of his thought, every sentence, every line, was traced with deliberation, — nay, revised and interlined with scrupulous care. There was none of the labor-saving that comes with the modern way of dictating to an amanuensis or type-writer, none of the slovenly penmanship which is said sometimes to be the cruel affectation of men of letters. In the hundreds of pages of his manuscript that I have read, formal essay or familiar epistle, I do not remember ever hesitating at a single illegible word or carelessly written letter: the pages of the autobiographic fragment just given are as scrupulously penned as a school-boy's composition; no trembling of the hand, even, is discernible, though written far past eighty, in the lassitude and dread of threatening infirmity. This firmness of fibre, this resolute temper, is strongly characteristic both of the scholar and the man.

As a set-off to this laborious habit of mind, he had the rare gift — which we have never known in equal degree except in the case of Edward Everett — of mastering with verbal accuracy, by a single reading, the form and phrase of a long elaborate discourse. The advantage this gave him on the public platform, on formal occasions, has been often felt; and all the more, because (as we may recall of the eulogy on Bellows and Emerson <sup>1</sup>) it was attended with so easy a mastery of matter as well as form that his mind played freely, in variation of the theme, as the point, the phrase, or the illustration might suggest itself at the moment. I have never understood why he did not avail himself of this remarkable power in the ordinary exercises of the pulpit: possibly it involved a grasp and a strain that he did not care to put forth too often. But among the very last of his public utterances there were two occasions — in Providence and in Philadelphia — when, distrusting his eyesight for the evening service, after speaking in the usual way in the morning, he secured by that forthputting of memory the freedom of speech he craved.

These habits of thought and speech, along with the gathering of great treasures of book-lore, we may suppose to have been the attainment of those six years of his first pastoral charge. At the age of thirty, with powers ripened to self-reliance, and with rare wealth of intellectual resource, he became minister of the Independent Congregational Church in

<sup>1</sup> These are given, with the author's revision, as an Appendix to "Our Liberal Movement."

Bangor, Maine, then a place remote and hard to reach,<sup>1</sup> but full of the intelligence, the enterprise, the eager confidence in a brilliant future, which we have been more accustomed since to associate with the growth of our Western cities. The fifteen years spent here not only served to develop his powers to a more vigorous independence of thought and will than they might, possibly, have grown to in an older community, but were the period when the position he has so long held before the public was firmly taken and broadly recognized. Among warm friends and eager learners in the circle of his local ministry there was an ease and joy in the assertion of his own ripening thought; while the special contribution he could bring, from the intimate home knowledge he had of German, made his most characteristic and valuable gift to the larger movement of thought that illuminated those days. The first of three later visits to Europe for the purpose of study and travel, and of by far the deepest influence in shaping his riper thought, was in the year 1847. Spending the ensuing winter in Rome, he not only became an appreciative student of Italian art, thus enriching his culture by a vein which most of us are obliged to neglect, but was a witness to some of the most striking scenes of that strange revolutionary spring-time of 1848, including the moment of the passion-

<sup>1</sup> A parishioner of his, whom I knew afterwards, was once becalmed for a week off the headland of Penobscot Bay on the return voyage from Boston; and the overland journey in winter had its full share of arctic hardships and perils: he has told me of toiling through half the night to help right the stage-coach when upset, or keep it from being blockaded in the snow-drifts.



ate protest of Pope Pius IX. against the demands of the revolutionists : *Non voglio, non debbo, non posso !* — words which he was fond of quoting as he had heard them from those sonorous lips. The delight of that one deep draught of the intellectual life of Italy, and then of moving with the ease of native speech in the scholarly circles of revisited Germany, made one of the treasures of a memory ever fresh, during the years that followed.

With his rare intellectual gifts and great wealth of literary culture, there was no one farther than he from the *dilettante* spirit which cherishes literature or art for its own sake, apart from its higher uses. It was his fixed habit of mind to regard those things not merely as good and beautiful in themselves, but as instruments of service. It was highly characteristic of this temper of mind that he disdained the clamor, and wholly dissented from the argument, that demanded international copyright on the ground of property-right, holding in scorn whatever seemed to turn into a trade the high vocation of authorship. The temper was that of the teacher, the preacher, the interpreter of thought or beauty to the higher life of men. This vocation was very early recognized in him, and it was rewarded in his long career with every honor which service like his can win. Yet, in the simplicity of his judgment of himself, he always doubted whether he ought not to have followed his first inclination to a physician's life ; and always regretted that he was born too early (as he thought) to be baptized into the newer life of Science, instead of that almost purely literary



and philosophic training, in which most persons saw the noblest field for the exercise of his powers.

While he was born to the birthright and full enjoyment of companionship in the most brilliant intellectual era of New England, he brought to it a gift of his own, which no other man either did or could, — the gift (as we might almost term it) of two mother-tongues, English and German being about equally familiar to him from his school-days. It was not alone the literary knowledge of German, in which many scholars may have rivalled him; but he learned the tongue as a boy amongst boys, when the great day of German literature was still shining in its mellow afternoon, while Goethe, whose sun was not set, was still the object of that revering homage which is never, perhaps, so loyally felt as by young disciples to a living Master; so that not only he was quick in later years to resent any disparagement of that hero of his boyish imagination, but in him and in other masters could trace the touches of home-feeling, and even here and there the reminiscences of school-boy slang, in the diction that makes up the marvellous composite of the Goethean verse and prose. This *atmosphere* of German thought rather than its form and understanding merely, he had brought home with him just at a time when it not only quickened and enlarged his own university studies, but could be turned to later account, to make flexible and rich the somewhat provincial dialect of letters and scholarship then prevailing in New England. This, rather than any formal teaching of philosophy, —

which he disbelieved in and kept aloof from, — made his characteristic service to our so-called “Transcendental” movement.

Perhaps the greatest social as well as intellectual delight he ever enjoyed was in the companionship of that golden age (as we are tempted to call it now) when the glory and the dew of youth still lay upon many fields of thought which we have since had to survey with measuring-rods and to take account of in critical judgment and comparison. And those companionships were perhaps always the closest and most familiar to his thought. None others have ever quite taken the place to him of the names of Emerson, Furness, and Margaret Fuller. It may be that some, even among his own students, have since those days found or imagined him difficult of approach and slow of sympathy; and he might find it hard to pardon an affront once given to his good taste, his self-respect, or his jealous regard for a friend. So that it has been often a surprise to find how generous, considerate, tender, even humble-minded this strong man could be when the magic circle was once passed, or when his thought came up for judgment and comparison in debate as between equals. The writer of these lines has been personally indebted to that generous consideration in many ways that do not concern the public, and has come to know instances of his bounty in giving, and thoughtful loving-kindness, which for mere justice' sake, and in memory of a friend, and for the better understanding of those who did not see that side, justify this brief mention here.

It may be mentioned here that the singular vigor and tenacity of memory, before spoken of, embraced first and naturally those masses of literary task-work which made his conspicuous public performance; but took in with equal ease long passages from classic writers,—particularly from the poets, both German and English, who made his favorite companions,—and served as a great help in the act of composition as well. For example, the lines entitled “The Idealist” (first published as “Questionings”), one of the longest and most striking of his poems and among those he regarded as the best, were suggested to his thought while watching the stars during a sleepless night in the Bangor mail-coach, and were wholly elaborated in memory, to be written down on his arrival at home. Others of his verses were composed in a similar way. Whatever was metrical in form, he said, was taken easily into his memory and stayed there. For example, referring quite incidentally to the early promise and the early loss of Edward Emerson, the most brilliantly gifted of the three brothers, he quoted at once for illustration the pathetic stanzas in which that rare genius bade farewell to his native land from the ship that bore him out of Boston Harbor upon the voyage from which he never returned. Nor were these as one might expect, only the familiar handling of long-kept hoards; for once, when I spoke of those verses of Matthew Arnold (“Obermann once more”) which tell so powerfully the tragedy and pathos of that desolation of spirit in ancient Rome

which bowed her proud head to the yoke of Oriental faith, he began, in that deep and mellow tone of recitation which his friends will recall so well, and without hesitation repeated perhaps a dozen of those wonderful stanzas, which (I think) he had read only once, but which had so struck and clung upon his memory.

One other quality in him appears to have been ripened in these days: it belongs, in part, to that which President Walker had in mind when he spoke to me of him once as "the only man we have who is master of *the grand style*." This phrase might possibly mean only what is ornate and orotund in rhetorical composition; but in this case it meant something more. I was first distinctly conscious of it in a passage of the "Christian Examiner," about 1851, speaking of the effect upon the imagination of an experience at sea; and I have since thought that in this one deep resonant chord there was a tone not reached by any other living master of English prose: we might compare it to the music of a bell, which is no one single note, like that of a bugle, but is made up of the harmonies, peal within peal, which respond to the intricate curves, of varying diameter, that make the shape and vibrate to the cadence of the bell. A few passages in his writings — in no writer are there more than a very few — will justify this comparison.

The mind of Dr. Hedge was in like manner sensitive to what we may call the *resonances* with which the soul or the imagination responds to the utter-

ance of a thought, — it may be in a poetic image, or it may be in a philosophic truth. He would never be content with the abstract expression of a thing, the one hard formal statement. To his mind it must speak in the language of literature rather than science. And this had a more far-reaching effect upon the substance and range of the thought itself than might at first be supposed. Thus, for example, he was extraordinarily well read in the literature of philosophy, — which we may, indeed, qualify by saying that it was mainly the literature anterior to the last thirty or forty years. But he was extremely distrustful of the dogmatism of formal metaphysics. He steadily and with increasing emphasis disparaged the systematizing of Hegel and his disciples. He as constantly and with increasing satisfaction gave his preference to Schelling, whom he regarded as having the profounder insight of a seer instead of a theorist. What we might still less have expected, while his knowledge of German was that of a mother tongue, while he read its philosophic dialect without even the conscious effort which most readers need to assimilate the phrase and the thought, it was not his habit to read a treatise consecutively, with regard to the logic of its structure. Thus he had never read through that comparatively brief and compactly reasoned essay, Kant's "Critique," but was familiar only with its speculations on Time and Space and with its criticism of the argument for a speculative Theism; while he might show, incidentally, the pleasure



he took in various of Kant's minor essays, which are never heard of in histories of philosophy. Then, too, it was the poetic and speculative, not the logical or didactic, side of natural science that interested him; and he liked it best when in some shape that allowed one to treat as open questions its most fundamental theories,—even the theory of gravitation, or the structure of the solar system. With much insight and delight in speculative philosophy, it was always the literary study of it that delighted him most.

Again, with a great range both of knowledge and of sympathy in the field of history, he rather preferred views of it which were generalistic, speculative, and somewhat vague. Writers, like Gibbon, of powerful bias, especially such as express their conception in literary “good form” and in “the grand style,” attracted him more than those more curiously accurate: history, like philosophy, was rather literature than science. Nor, though a scholar of admirable equipment, was he in the modern sense a trained philologist: his interest in philology was that of a curious amateur. His large knowledge and facile use of the learned tongues, especially Latin, did not lead him, in general, to deal with the sources of our historical knowledge in the original speech, even in his chosen and professional field of ecclesiastical history. The thought, the doctrine, the persons of the great and eminent men who make the actors in that field, he knew well, often with a grasp of imagination and memory of facts that made his



knowledge of them singularly vivid, instructive, and real. Particular writers, too, he knew by the critical and profound apprehension of their own works. Augustine, Anselm, and Raymond Lully may be mentioned among those who thus attracted him; and, of later writers, Spinoza and Leibnitz, whom he had studied extensively and patiently in their own text. But the great web of history is wrought of the lives and thoughts of a multitude of lesser men, who should also be judged by touch of the hand and look of the eye, — that is, by their own word for what they thought and did; and of this knowledge he took less account. I do not think, for example, that he knew the Greek Fathers (unless the very earliest) except at second hand; and, excepting Scotus Erigena, the Latin ecclesiastical writers of the “lower” period were mostly unknown to him. On the other hand, his literary apprehension of the great classics, Greek as well as Latin, was eager, discriminating; and fresh.

One who is greatly his inferior in range and wealth of the knowledge to be had from books — as there is no one of us but must confess himself to be — will take such indications as the above to show not the extent or accuracy or value of that knowledge in him, but only the particular lines in which it lay. We take the impression of a large, luminous, and richly stored intelligence; we stand towards it in the attitude of learners; and we are aware of the powerful influence that comes to us from that mental touch. When, further, we look to see the form of the channel through which it

comes, we are at once struck by noticing how much is instruction and discipline, how little is mere didactics: to use the familiar distinction, how little in comparison is the "literature of knowledge," how much the "literature of power." Now power tells best in a series of waves, or blows, — not like the tug of a chain, which is no stronger than its weakest link. It will be found that the delivery of Dr. Hedge's argument — take, for example, his best-known work, "Reason in Religion" — was in a series of discourses, each rounded and complete in itself, which developed a single order of thought with culminating effect, but with little of logical coherence. There was a felicity of phrase, but absolute injustice of thought, in the criticism which once spoke of these discourses as a garland of plucked flowers tied together with a string, not a living plant that yields them by vital force: the live thought connecting them runs underground, like the root of "Solomon's seal," sending up its shoots independent of one another, and is invisible to those who do not look below the surface. But, it may be contended, the argument is all the more readily grasped, and so all the more effective, because delivered in this form. And the book just named has doubtless had far more influence in our own later thinking than any other of its time and class.

Quite in keeping with the mould in which he thus cast his argument, Dr. Hedge felt a certain impatience and disdain of that intellectual method which affects logical completeness, and tries to for-

multate all modes of being in a coherent system. From his own mind he seems distinctly to have excluded anything that could be called a theory of the universe. He was equally offended on the one hand by the argument for Final Causes, which he thought to have been effectually discredited in Kant's "Critique," and by modern theories of Evolution, which seemed to him a baseless dogmatism, and which he never attempted really to understand. Probably that conception of the universe would have pleased him best which took into account only the order of Ideas exhibited in it; and if he had formulated it at all, it would have been in a more or less qualified Berkleyanism. What was not in the Divine order of Ideas touched neither his philosophy nor his religion. If he tended more and more, in later life, to a way of thinking that refused to regard the Eternal God as the Creator of material things, and set up an illogical Dualism over against our traditional Theism, it was, I think, more from a moral than from an intellectual motive: he would not make the Holy One responsible for the woe and wickedness we see; he would at least reserve a sanctuary of worship for the soul, undisturbed by the jarring and painful argument that ever seeks and ever fails to reconcile the facts of daily life with the conception the mind loves to frame of a purely benevolent Creator.

And it may be held, further, that his mental temperament — poetic, sensitive, and sympathetic rather than severely logical — made it all the harder to accept the optimism which consoles the average

religious mind. He would admire without heartily accepting the clear and brilliant argumentation of that masterpiece of forensic divinity, Martineau's "Study of Religion;" and, while he was morally repelled, he was intellectually fascinated — more, perhaps, than he would readily admit to himself — by Schopenhauer's interpretation of the more sombre facts of life. At any rate, he kept his religion and his cosmology quite apart, excepting so far as he might indulge in speculation or poetic meditation upon the latter. In the constant mood of his inward life he was a reverent, submissive, and humble worshipper of the Living God; while he refused to lift with daring hand the veil that hides the mystery of the Eternal, and repudiated the pious logic by which many have thought to bolster up their faith.

Just what effect this habit of thought had on his doctrinal belief, it would be hard and not quite safe to say. In his own expression of it he was true to the Emersonian maxim, to see and say the one thing, honestly and plainly, as it reveals itself to the mind in its best moods, and let the matter of logical consistency shift for itself. Reverent and submissive in his own acceptance of the discipline of life, and asserting with whatever fulness of meaning it could bear to him the sublime and comforting faith of the soul's eternal life, he yet has given public expression<sup>1</sup> to an exposition of that faith

<sup>1</sup> See "Atheism in Philosophy," p. 388, and the essay on "Personality" in the volume entitled "Luther and Other Essays," pp. 286-288.

which seems to deny outright the survival of man's personal consciousness beyond the present sphere. That this was no mere phase of philosophic speculation he showed, further, by his repeated assertion that memory and consciousness are "functions of the brain," which cannot be conceived to survive its dissolution; nay, by the solace he found in insisting upon this view at a time of great suffering and depression, when "to drag the lengthening chain of memory" into perpetual duration seemed to him the most dreadful of anticipations, and absolute repose was the only boon he craved. To which it is only to be added that the Eternal Life itself, with whatever it may imply for the serenity and support of the individual soul, was to him the most vivid of realities, and that, religiously as well as mentally, he walked always in those "ways of the Spirit" which it was ever the burden weighing upon his thought to interpret fitly to other men.

A friend who was privileged to be much in communication with him in his last years writes as follows:—

"In the early months of this year [1887] he was for many weeks afflicted with a most depressing (*eczematous*) complaint, as to which I have often thought since that its torment exceeded many times over that of martyrdom by slow fire, as in the case of Servetus: indeed, the memory of it is, I think, to be traced in the tone of some of his writings since, for example in the article on 'Nature, a Problem,' in the 'Unitarian Review' of March, 1888. During this time of suffering his frequent and almost passionately ex-



pressed wish was only for absolute forgetfulness and rest. It happened once that, when I had not seen him for two or three weeks, he sent for me to his bedside, and spoke to me nearly in these words: 'I wished to see you at this time. When I recover from this sickness, if I do recover, you will see another man, and you will not know your friend. I shall have lost my memory; I shall be afflicted with a troublesome *aphasia*; and I shall not be able to say what I wish to say now,'—going on, with strong assurance of affection and of gratitude for the service he conceived me to have rendered, to give the few instructions which I was to observe. I assured him (as I very sincerely could) that I thought his fear quite groundless: I had watched carefully, and had observed that (allowing for the languor due to his malady) his thought was always precise and clear, and the right word was always chosen. I left him, I think, partly reassured; and indeed, as soon as the crisis was past, he not only rallied surprisingly fast, but his conversation was never more fluent and clear, or his memory of the past held in easier grasp, than in the months that followed."

This testimony, it is true, needs to be qualified by adding that something—not much—of the difficulty he dreaded did in fact occur. It was most marked by the inability of sustained literary effort; the old habit and desire remained, but after a few paragraphs or pages the pen absolutely refused its task,—“by a sort of fate,” as he expressed it. Thus the publication of Emerson's memoir was the occasion of a long series of delightful reminiscences; but to the hope that these might be



wrought into such a picture and judgment of his life-long friend as other friends would love to keep, he could only reply by pleading the utter impossibility of the task. And while his talk (which we would test sometimes in that way) ranged as freely as ever through the wide fields of history, literature, and philosophy that had been familiar to him, there would come the check — oftener as time went on — of being unable to recall the name of the person or the place: Bayle, Leibnitz, and Newton — Paris, Genoa, the Riviera — occur among the names that had to be supplied to fill the blank. But he held with a jealous tenacity to what remained of his wonderful verbal memory, and among the last efforts by which he strove to keep his grasp of conscious intelligence was the silent repetition to himself of passages, even at some length, from German poets, which had been among the most cherished treasures of his great intellectual wealth.

A mind so individual, and so far apart from the conventional beliefs of Christendom, was slow in finding wide popular recognition, and long failed of its proper weight among those of its generation. That his power was felt in his circle of immediate influence was a thing of course: his word was always "weighty and powerful," — the more, because much of what he said, and often the best of what he said, had to do not with matters of speculation, but with every-day ethics, the personal experience of religion, and the successive crises of our public life. But it was when he was already more

than fifty, and his name came up in connection with a certain academic appointment he was understood to desire, that Dr. Putnam (then in authority in the university) spoke to me of the contrast there was between the honor in which Dr. Hedge was held among those of his own profession and the ignorance of him in the general public. This lack of general appreciation afterwards changed very fast to vague respect and then to better knowledge; and for full thirty years he has been everywhere fully recognized as without a peer in the communion to which he loyally belonged from first to last, certainly without a superior among the intellectual leaders of our country.

This change in his attitude towards the large world of those more remotely interested in philosophy and letters had to do, it is likely, with his removal from Bangor to Providence, in 1850; and again with his removal from Providence to Brookline, in 1857. Here he was in what he probably felt to be his proper place, as one of the immediate Boston circle; and, besides, it was now that, by persuasion of his near connection, Rev. Thomas B. Fox, he took editorial charge, for a few years, of the "Christian Examiner," and so opened new channels of communication with that wider world. At this date, too, he accepted the charge of the department of Ecclesiastical History in the Harvard Divinity School, which he held for twenty-one years, receiving meanwhile, in 1872, the appointment of Professor of German Literature in the University, which he held till 1881.

The last forty years of his life were thus spent in full view and in close relations with that larger intellectual public to which he always felt so strong attraction. It was also the period of his greatest activity and influence as a writer. The series of volumes already cited — “Reason in Religion” (1865), “Ways of the Spirit” (1877), “Atheism in Philosophy” (1884), and “Luther” (1888), together with “The Primeval World of Hebrew Tradition” (1869), and a thin volume of translations and original poems — have been the waymarks of this later career. They are the proper subject of literary criticism, which I do not propose to combine with this personal memorial; and his place in the future development of our religious thought will turn upon the judgment that shall be formed upon them. To me it simply happens that for just one third of a century I was thrown into near personal relations with the man, sometimes as helper and sometimes as successor in his work, — sometimes, too, in a very close and confidential way, — and this seems to lay upon me the charge not of critic, but of interpreter in part: to help, if I may, by such knowledge of him as I have been able to gain through personal communication, in the right understanding of the lesson which he has left to the world. The lesson, truly interpreted, is that which we find in the character, the spiritual endowment, and the mental habit of the man. How these had their roots in the antecedents and their growth in the earlier stages of his career, it has been my attempt to show. And with this key it is my hope that the work of his

pen and hand — which with every gifted and original mind is a sort of hieroglyph, needing that clew to its proper reading — may be the better understood. I am sure that the man himself will receive his full meed of loving honor.

## V.

### SOME YOUNGER MEMORIES.

BEFORE closing this record, which is so largely made up of personal recollections and impressions, it seems fitting to include in it the names of a few whose history belongs to a later day, most of whom were my own contemporaries and companions. In the tender words of Henry Vaughan, "they are all gone into the world of light," and remain our examples of the "holy hope and high humility," which belong to the ideal of life we cherished together. What I would recall of them is not anything that would make the faintest outline of a biography or hint of criticism, but only some touch or memory, not elsewhere recorded, which in justice to them I would not willingly let die.

First, however, two or three names occur, marking the transition from the time I have been chiefly dealing with to that which is properly of my own generation. The impression one gets from the companionship, in later life, of those old enough to have been once looked up to as his teachers and guides is the one I wish here very briefly to recall. This impression some of us have had in the memory of a well-marked group of men, examples of a special

form of idealism more familiar once than now, who made, as it were, a "bridge of light" that brought over the finest faith of an older generation into the new intellectual conditions by which we found ourselves surrounded; whose generous interpretation of that faith saved many a mind from the sterile doubt which a period of rationalizing criticism might else have carried with it.

It was something, in that day, to be a herald and interpreter of the new light that (to the deep mis-giving of some of our best teachers) was breaking over upon us out of Germany, — to be a loving expositor of Schleiermacher and Goethe, and at the same time to keep all the pure single-heartedness of "the faith which was once delivered to the saints," through such apostles as Freeman and Channing. This service James Freeman Clarke, more perhaps than any single man, has done for us; but in doing it he was one of a goodly company. It seems as if no one who had not felt in its prime the glow of that quickening movement of the Spirit could quite know how much that group of men have been to those who came a little after them. It happened that I was in California when the death of William Henry Channing had just left Dr. Clarke the sole survivor of that group; and I was moved to express to him by letter my sense of this peculiar debt. His reply was as follows: —

"I received your very kind letter, and it gave me very great pleasure. Your description of the interest in the group of which Theodore Parker, William Henry Channing, James H. Perkins, George Ripley,



and others were members, and with which I also had the pleasure of being associated, was peculiarly pleasing and touched me nearly. How strange are the influences which act on us ! There was our poor little 'Western Messenger,' which found you out in North-borough, and found our dear brother Conant in Chicago, and in which we put the best life we had. How well James H. Perkins wrote ! When it was printed in Louisville, I had to be publisher, editor, contributor, proof-reader, and boy to pack up the copies and carry them to the post-office. But I enjoyed it. And you read 'Theodore' too, and went to Amory Hall ! I have scarcely ever heard of any one's reading 'Theodore,' but, if you liked it, perhaps others also liked it. Every man who writes a book or preaches a sermon casts his bread on the waters, happy if he finds it again after many days. It was very kind of you to write to me as you have done, and your kindly appreciation of some of my past efforts warms my heart. We do not care for praise as we grow old, but we always are made happy by sympathy.

'Common as light is love,  
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.'"

While of Dr. Clarke's many and choice gifts the greatest was charity, — which we may here interpret as that fine and rare quality which drew men to him in confiding sympathy, — he could be valiant for the right with a courage as invincible and obstinate as any champion of the sword. I remember a strange scene in Faneuil Hall in 1847, when, without hesitation as without effect, he pressed his word of "sweet reasonableness" upon a stormy

crowd, — when the hall fairly glistened with the shining caps of a valiant crew mustered in for the war with Mexico. One can point to at least three distinct issues in these later years of political note, in which that serene conviction of duty, backed by no little hardihood of temper, left a definite mark upon the event, the chief of them being his defence of independent politics in the convention at Worcester. But in general he has left the impression of one averse to contention and the strife of tongues. No one that we can anywhere recall has led the intellectual life in an atmosphere quite so radiant with the gladness and affection of a great host of friends; no apostle of the Word, whom we can readily name, has sent forth that word so penetrating and so broadly into the hearts of those waiting to be delivered from bondage to error and fear, who received it in the spirit of glad confidence which was so eminently the spirit of his gospel.

It is now a great while ago — in fact, some years more than sixty — that I remember hearing read, in my father's vestry, a little tract which may be called the first sounding of the key-note of Unitarian missions in the West. It was in the form of a letter written from Ephraim Peabody (then in Cincinnati) to George Putnam. I believe it was the same tract which keenly interested William G. Eliot, then completing his course in the Cambridge Divinity School. As I heard the account from his mother (who was, long after, a member of my congregation in Washington), he resolved at once,

with the tenacity of purpose characteristic of him, that the West should be his field; and it was not a call from without, or an invitation in any sense, but a study of the map of the United States, that first made him, in that early day of tedious and difficult travel, fix on a place so remote and unpromising as St. Louis. His friends were grieved and disappointed at this resolve, for he was very dear to them; and they had fond hopes of a Boston settlement, which would have kept him nearer, and given what seemed a more brilliant opportunity. Finding him inflexible, his father at length said to him: "Go where you think it is right. I will find you in clothes, and where you go, no doubt, you will have food and lodging; and God be with you, my son." At the beginning he found an audience of thirty,—at best, perhaps twice as many. At the end of six months he had a congregation of *nine*, but, of these, seven were resolved to stand by him; and by the end of the year they were increased to two hundred. The result makes perhaps the most eventful chapter in our denominational history. When once, during the war, a brother of mine, visiting St. Louis on business of the Sanitary Commission, said to a friend, "I suppose that Dr. Eliot has done as much as any man to save Missouri to the Union and make it a free State," the reply was instant and prompt: "As much as any man? Dr. Eliot has done ten times more for that than any other ten men put together!"

There was a time — in 1847, I think — when it was proposed and voted to invite Dr. Eliot to serve

as Secretary of the American Unitarian Association. Antislavery feeling at this time ran high; the action of religious bodies was jealously watched, and the Association was at once sharply attacked for putting its confidence in a man supposed to have some complicity with slavery,—nay, charged with being himself a slaveholder. The true story shows how cruel and unjust such charges sometimes were. For it appears, from the account his mother gave to me, that a certain gentleman, to whom he was under obligation for much kindness, had lived for a time in his family, bringing a servant-woman,—a slave,—to whom the family became much attached. Afterwards it happened that the gentleman failed in business; and, under the cruel law of slavery, the woman was liable to be seized for his debt, and sold to the Southern market. Full of distress, she appealed to Mr. Eliot, who paid out of his own means the price of her ransom, never took a title-deed or was her legal owner,—unless it might be technically, till her free papers could be made out,—and simply accepted her verbal assurance that her wages would go towards the payment of the sum advanced. Only a small part of this was ever in fact repaid; for when, some time after, Mr. Eliot took a journey to Europe, he cancelled the debt, giving her a small house and a cow, and she lived thenceforth in comfort and independence. Such is the true story of his “slaveholding.”

And who is there that can possibly make a younger generation understand what the name of

Thomas Starr King means to those who knew and loved him? A noble memorial statue in San Francisco; the well-known story of General Scott, who said he had heard that California was saved to the Union by "a young man of the name of King;" two small volumes, without the light of those eyes to read them by, — these are all, or nearly all, that the general public can ever know of him. Yet to us his presence and his loss seem so near! Many are the recollections cherished of that young life, which ought to have a far more full presenting than was given by his friend Mr. Whipple as an introduction to the volume of his Discourses: the letters, in particular, of which none are preserved there, would give a far more living picture of that bright and versatile intelligence than any more formal composition. But who is there to prevent such memorials from fading into the dimness of an unregistered tradition? In his brief public career, and in the charm of friendly intercourse, he seemed all transparent and open as daylight to whoever would come and hear, as if there were no shadow behind that beaming and winning personality: the luminous eye, the noble quality of voice, a certain eager gayety of temper, quick wit and humor, an intelligence to which the term "lucid" as well as wide, swift, and vigorous belonged more absolutely than to any other I have ever known, drew men to him as to a friend whom not only they would inevitably love, but might easily read through and through. But a correspondence with him early in the fifties contained one letter (lent, alas, and



lost) which threw a deeper light on his earlier life than anything that yet survives. And there were hints and confessions from his lips in conversation, — not, surely, of anything that stained the crystal purity of his life, but which showed a vein that appealed to one's sympathy in quite another way than the public could ever know. In particular, he lamented a certain "coldness" of temperament which no one could ever suspect under the charm of that genial companionship. Dr. Hale has told of his distrust of his own ability to speak out, spontaneously, such words as flow from heart to heart. I happened myself to know (being just then his guest) that what seemed, on a public occasion, to be an easy flow of unpremeditated wit was anxiously studied and put together in the spare minutes of a very busy week. The natural generosity of his temper towards certain matters of public right was cramped by a fastidious critical sense that shut off his sympathy with some popular moral movements of his day, and made the ruder methods of many "reformers" strongly repugnant to him; and the full wealth and strength of his nature, we may well believe, would never have shown itself, but for the magnificent opportunity of those last four years, — when the cause was that of national unity as well as personal liberty; when for once he threw himself upon the tide of a noble passion without any misgiving or withholding. I copy here from a letter of this later period, written in San Francisco in February, 1862 : —



“I am tolerably well, and intolerably at work. Never wrote so much in a year as during the last year, and am speaking as much as my *feeble* voice will permit. Among my recent activities have been nine lecture-sermons on the Book of Job. They were received so well that I am repeating them. So you see that we are not utterly barbarous here. Some chapters of [a recent book] stirred me so much that I wrote a lecture on ‘Secession in Palestine and its Consequences,’ which I delivered twice to crammed houses in our church and two or three times elsewhere. I am to stay a year or two longer from the dear East and precious Boston. Then I want to see Europe, — perhaps shall have earned the right to see it. . . . We are rejoicing just now over victories [Port Royal, etc.]. I arranged a great exultation in church, last Sunday, in which the music was glorious. And such a jam! But I fear the diplomatists. Traitors we can beat, but the *traders*! Yet let us hope that God has a purpose of winding *his* anaconda around the South, which won’t be prevailed on to let go.”

And again, from a letter written to Dr. Hedge a little more than six weeks before the writer’s death (Jan. 12, 1864): —

“San Francisco is trying to do her duty again on the Sanitary subscription. We shall send \$200,000 this year, and I am now arranging circulars and plans to secure \$100,000 from the interior of the State. Perhaps I shall have to take the stump to secure it. But my church duties are now very heavy, and my strength begins to totter. I should like to give the new church, with its grand congregation and ample treasury, into the keeping of a new voice and spirit.

I have no carnal pride in it whatever, but a sincere longing to go into quiet and seclusion. The moment the war is over, I shall run like a mole for a burrow — perhaps Burroughs Place again.”

From a letter of earlier date (1851), I copy this illustration of the conservative temper of those days:—

“Perhaps you have seen in the papers that I delivered a Fourth of July address before [a certain New England town]. I have heard of ‘Hunkers’ and ‘Union men,’ but never saw the genuine article till I made acquaintance with the leading citizens of ——. They were determined, they told me, to have no one as an orator at all tinctured with Free-soilism; and after trying in vain to get either Choate, Cushing, Frank Pierce, or B. F. Hallet, telegraphed to me, relying on the newspaper reports of the Artillery sermon that I was ‘*national*’ and true blue. I was in what Charles Francis Adams calls ‘the tight pinch,’ but succeeded in satisfying all but two or three of them in the address, and those took exception to some remarks which *implied* that the institutions of the South were not so consistent with the American idea as those of the North. I was defended by others of the committee on the ground that *my language was misunderstood and that I could not have meant so!*”

He said once, pleasantly, that in the new Californian creed “we are no second-adventists; we believe in no ‘thousand years,’ but in thousands a year.” But no one, surely, was more generous of his own means, or more faithful in urging the responsibility of those who had greater. I insert

here, by request of a friend, a characteristic bit of a practical discourse of his on "The Christian Dollar":—

"We say it is the duty of every man, with any means, to observe proportion in his surplus expenses; to have a conscientious order with regard to the service which his superfluous dollars discharge. Over against every prominent allowance for a personal luxury, the celestial record book ought to show some entry in favor of the cause of goodness and suffering humanity; for every guinea that goes into a theatre, a museum, an athenæum, or the treasury of a music hall, there ought to be some twin-guinea pledged for a truth, or flying on some errand of mercy in a city so crowded with misery as this. Then we have a right to our amusements and our grateful pleasures. Otherwise we have no right to them, but are liable every moment to impeachment in the court of righteousness and charity for our treachery to heaven and our race."

Some years ago I had a conversation with our old friend, Mr. Oliver Steele, of Buffalo, who told me some facts that seem to me very interesting about Starr King's parentage,—he having been a member of his father's congregation when preaching as a Universalist minister in Connecticut. Mr. King, the father, was born in New York City, and it was through *his* mother that the son inherited the strain of Irish blood which I had been told of in accounting for his remarkable vivacity of mind and wit: the father, I have heard, was even a more brilliant talker and story-teller than the son. He

had been educated as a mechanic,—I forget in what trade,—and had gained a certain fame among his fellows as a ready and eloquent speaker in their trade meetings. It was customary for the New York trades, in turn, to elect an orator—generally a lawyer, preacher, or politician of local fame—to give an annual address before their united societies; and when the turn of his own came, proud of their fellow-craftsman, they broke the precedent by appointing him speaker of the year. His address made such an impression that he was soon persuaded to lay down the tools of his craft and take the post of preacher, which he filled with eminent success in New York, Portsmouth, and Charlestown, till his death about the age of forty. Starr King had said more than once that he never expected to outlive his father's age: the horizon, up to seventy or eighty, looked very far and dim to him. In fact, he died early in his fortieth year.

John Weiss, too, was a man whom one should have known in person to know at all as he was,—his gayety and invincible wit, and the singular dash of humor with a pathetic something that was partly ill-health and partly a certain reckless disregard of self, along with his busy, immense, yet largely fruitless industry (for masses of fact laboriously gathered in his commonplace-book seemed never to find a use), and the eccentricity of style and temper that handicapped his real genius. All these are matters of keen personal impression, and need to be dealt with—as they have been—by one (O. B.

Frothingham) with whom they made part of a near and affectionate memory of the man.

He was three years before me in college, His father, I have understood, was a barber in the town of Worcester, a German by blood and by race a Jew, — to which last I have sometimes ascribed the singular fervor of his religious genius. The first I ever saw of him was in the college yard, where he had a sort of ovation from his classmates on his return from a few months' rustication, and frolicked like a child among them. To everybody's surprise who knew his quaint levity and drollery, he joined our class in the Divinity School, spending a year of the course in Germany. Meeting him from time to time in the "Hook-and-Ladder," and having afterwards some special links of communication with him while he was in New Bedford, I have felt personally nearer to him than any degree of mental sympathy I could claim might seem to warrant. Having at one time something to do with the "Christian Examiner," I succeeded in getting from him one or two papers which I greatly valued. But he was always eccentric, kicking out of the traces, and enveloping his brilliant parts more and more in a thicket of sparkling rhetoric; hampered by ill health and personal anxieties; but having, with a certain carelessness of appreciation and success, a winning sweetness and humility at bottom, that made everybody fond of him. I tried once to get him to work out a sketch of Jesus "the Galilean," such as he had given the hint of in conversation, and might have developed with great vigor if he



had chosen ; but he appears never to have put his hand to it. He said, with much emphasis, that the popular theory of Jesus, his mildness and serenity and so on, was thoroughly mistaken : he was a man, on the other hand, of deep and powerful nature, capable of strong passion and high political enthusiasm ; his most characteristic sayings were not the Beatitudes and moral precepts, but rather his hot denunciation of Scribes and Pharisees. But of this, and of many another judgment daringly unconventional, his full word was never spoken.

The mind of one so spontaneous and versatile is best read in his unstudied correspondence ; and I will fill out the hints already given, by transcribing at some length from letters which revive, by some characteristic touches, the interests and discussions of those days : —

NEW BEDFORD, January 29, 1849.

All thoughts of correspondence were interrupted by a fire, of which perhaps you have heard ; and now I am plunged in the lassitude consequent upon the material and mental dilapidations of the past three weeks, including the rehabilitation of another dwelling. But, upon opening my ill-used secretary again, I find your epistle, which was good enough to have deserved an earlier answer. So, in spite of a sort of general apathy, which has seized me in consequence of late excitements, I'll acknowledge said letter at the least. Were you ever burnt out (I doubt not the Spirit has flamed over your prairie, and that you have been tried "as by fire," but) burnt out physically, and left with two or three hundred wrecks of books, to



say nothing of a general reduction of your valuables? It is astonishing how much can be perpetrated in a kindly way in twenty minutes. Even a regular rebellion in 1834, conducted with damage as its final cause, was not more destructive. Engines suddenly decant the contents of three or four neighboring cloacas in your rooms, and the fire retires in disgust at seeing the dirty work. The warm-hearted fellow would have made clean work.

Such, then, is our latest noticeable circumstance; and I can fairly set down a new sensation as having been experienced. Note, too, that one of the children of light was wise enough to have his library insured, also furniture and wearing apparel. Who shall say, after that *policy*, that I am of the impracticables? But you would like to know what is going on; and here one is embarrassed, for there is very little to communicate. The gold fever rages fiercely in this city, and it is supposed that from four to five hundred stalwart men will emigrate. They all belong to the better class in this community, respectable mechanics and clerks. Its effect upon the whale-fishery is at present bad. Vessels can fit out here and carry passengers; but the place produces nothing to export. All freight for California is collected from other quarters. At the least, the whaling will languish for a couple of years, with little but passenger money to supply its place; and if they should commence whaling from San Francisco, it would materially damage this city. If there is a bubble and it bursts, why, then all speculation collapses also. But is it not a great way of founding a new State and of excluding slave-labor? and was not the year 1848 *mirabilis*?

Emerson came down here, and gave the pleasantest, most genial, most natural and generous lecture that I have heard from him, on the English. The apprehensive New England Platonist magnified discriminatingly his beef-eating and sensible, worldly mother. What an eye he has, after all, for national characteristics! You know they say that all his geese are swans; but, allowing for a faint tint of rose caught from the hot-house hospitality which received him, he gave them no more than their due, and it was refreshing to hear the fulgid mystic, "who is one slope from head to foot," talking about these men who "clinch every nail they drive," and who pursue Professor Bronson's method of abdominal speaking. Excuse the slender material of this letter, but accept the intention of acknowledging your favor and asking for more.

May 28, 1849.

Do you think that we up here read much, and settle all questions? Fond delusion! We proceed in the old way, and do not startle each other with great discoveries. We might as well read *Æschylus* and Peirce as for anything that we do to set forward Christianity another peg. I doubt whether even the Hook-and-Ladder divulges anything. They may look very busy and mysterious, but they have nothing to divulge. Something has kept me from their meetings for the last three or four times, so that my judgment is to be taken as merely that of an outsider, who has observed nothing uncommon in the atmosphere, and heard no explosion. Nor will the tracts of William B. Greene help the matter. They are smart, but do not increase the planet's velocity. One upon Trans-

cidentalism contains errors. But he must write and publish. Be assured, however, that he will not reinforce the total impression made upon your mind by Æschylus and Benny Peirce. He is great at attacking superannuated orthodox ministers up in Worcester County. By a smart and sudden dig in the pit of the stomach, he deprives the inoffensive men of wind, so that one hears no answers. Greene is eminently useful in this line. If any light is really thrown on the history of Christian speculation by the "Antiquities of Egypt," it has not yet fallen upon your correspondent, who is thus compelled to leave you in the dark, merely saying that Bunsen's book, from which something may be expected on that point, is not yet completed. Neither does ——'s theory appear to have modified the current speculation; and it can hardly be considered as a *transmittendum* (except as *supine in (h)um*), since it is still confined to himself. The *a-priori* autobiography is by our friend who knocks the wind out of dying ministers after the manner of Mexican nurses, and doubtless with the same humane intention of putting them out of pain. Part of it was read to the Hook-and-Ladder, and created inextinguishable peals of laughter, which he bore so genially that I thought there was something in his essay. Each one can judge for himself. The introduction seems to be a brisk flirtation with Pythagoras and the science (?) of numbers. The autobiography purported to be a genuine experience of Greene's in Florida, and as such is valuable. . . . Parker does not yet forget his wrongs. That is the worst thing I know about him. He flourishes and has influence; but he begins to complain of his head again. He works too hard. There is no controversy

with him now; but the Boston Association does not yet fraternize with him, and the whole matter is in abeyance. The Massachusetts Quarterly *ought* to do what you say, and I am confident that it will come out right. Ripley is reviewing Bushnell. The Examiner will remain about so-so. Parker skims those blue foreign pamphlets, but what he does with the cream is not known to me. I have not seen one for a year or two.

By far the most labored work of Weiss's hand was the Life of Theodore Parker, with copious editing of his correspondence. This was a task which he sought and eagerly undertook as a labor of love, with abundance of generous appreciation of the subject, but with the drawback of too little near personal acquaintance. As a record of Parker's religious life, especially by the free use made of his diary and correspondence, it is incomparably rich, and, in spite of Mr. Frothingham's admirable biography, it remains as the best source of our acquaintance with the man. Those who knew Weiss intimately, and had a key to the dialect in which he wrote, were hardly sensible (as it proved) of some things in that book which gave needless prejudice and pain to many excellent persons. It happened, too, that certain material was held back, for personal reasons or in hope of some completer future record, so that on one side the book was left defective, — Parker's relations with Emerson, for example. But, on the other hand, where no sensitive nerve was touched, it was a great delight to see that eager and strong intelligence, colored and heated by so much

of fervid passion, as interpreted by the fine, keen, and ardent genius of the biographer. And some single chapters in that book restore to us better than anything else we know the very form and pressure of the time it dealt with.

One thinks of Weiss's as a pathetically truncated career, when compared with the wealth of his gifts and the brightness of his promise. This impression comes partly, no doubt, from the circumstance that his sensitive and restless individualism took him away, in the latter years of his life, more and more from the associations and companionships he started with; and so the impression may be a fallacious one. Certainly, he was very impatient of the movement towards a more effective organizing of the Unitarian forces in the years just following the war; and, as soon as the "Radical" was started, he replied to the kindly words of Dr. Bellows and others, that his loyalty was due to that other, not to our older organs of thought. He felt himself in his last years to be more of a stranger among us than he need to have done, and said to one of our younger free-thinkers once, half sadly, that he himself, and a few others, had paid the price of that liberty in thinking which the later generation have enjoyed.

Frederick Newman Knapp, a cousin of Dr. Bellows, and to many others a very dear friend and beloved brother, was taken out of our sight on Saturday, the 12th of January, 1889, the nervous malady which had caused him severe suffering through much of his last few years terminating in



“a clot in the heart, producing instantaneous death.”<sup>1</sup> Surely, in the multiplied services which he rendered during his lifetime of sixty-seven years, few can have left a record so full of cheery usefulness. His two brief pastorates, in Brookline and in Plymouth (with the briefer ones at Yonkers, N. Y., and at East Cambridge), were filled with conscientious fidelity, like everything he did, but were hardly the most characteristic or most successful part of his work. The great opportunity of his life was when, early in the war, by that felicity of insight in Dr. Bellows which sometimes came like a great inspiration, “he was appointed Assistant Secretary [of the Sanitary Commission], and created and ruled the Special Relief department, of which the Soldiers’ Home [with which his name was identified through the years that followed] was a very small part.” I was with him in Washington for a few days, in the summer of 1864, when he told me, with a detail I wish I could remember now, the forlorn and lamentable condition of the discharged or disabled men, homesick, diseased, wounded, helpless, friendless, who were to be found by the ten thousand, thronged in those wide streets and desolate squares, on their weary pilgrimage—it might be to their home, it might be to their grave.

When Mr. Knapp sought to give his life to what seemed the one great duty of the time, in whatever

<sup>1</sup> By the account of a friend, “he was standing in his parlor just after breakfast, talking to a boy, when suddenly he said, *Oh!* rather as in surprise than in pain, laying his hand at the same time upon his heart, and dropping dead, apparently *instantaneously*. He was not, for God took him.”



field it should be most wanted, this form of it was just then and there most urgent; and his singular sagacity, sympathy, and genius of administration were put at once to their best use. It has been lately said that a hundred and fifty thousand of those men came into personal relation with him, and received from his shrewd, kindly, and practical intelligence the comfort and help which only such a friend could give. He knew very well the risks to health, the danger especially of breaking down with the insidious malaria that "walketh in darkness," and his precaution against it was an example of his cool practical sagacity. I occupied his room one night, while he was absent on some remoter charge: it was after a sultry September day; and early in the evening his attendant had a glowing fire of coals in the grate almost within arm's reach of the bed. That, he told me, had been done every night, summer or winter, since he first took charge, and to it he ascribed his complete freedom from any disabling illness.

But his duties often carried him away, to serve in the crowded horrors of transport vessels or at the front in the edge of battle. It was a delight to hear him tell of what he had seen and shared on such occasions with his associates in the work, Helen Gilson and others, whose names live with us as a benediction; of his kindly relations, too, with the colored refugees, and of the slave-woman with her twin daughters, "Dick and Jerry" (named, to fulfil a vow, after her two sons who had been sold away), who became his fast friends for life. Of one such

time it is recorded that when he had been warned, almost ordered, not to push forward into the Wilderness with his Sanitary supply-train, — a feat which skirmishing parties in the woods seemed to make impossible, — he persisted nevertheless, and was three days in advance of the regular army supplies, just when they were most needed, after one of those horrible engagements, and furnished all the relief that was required. This is not the only example of that more than military courage which was found among the ministers of humanity in that most trying service; but it should be told as one example of what that service often was. In recognition of it, he was (I have been told) the only man who had never worn the uniform, admitted to the honor and fellowship of the "Grand Army of the Republic."

A marked characteristic in Mr. Knapp was a happy disposition and a buoyancy of heart, which I cannot recall as ever once abating in an affectionate intercourse — first as pupil and teacher — extending over nearly fifty years. Under the burdensome presence of cares, in personal disappointments, or when suffering from sharp illness, that peculiar buoyancy of spirit seems never to have failed him. That, with his singularly kind and sympathetic temper, made a strong point in the personal influence which he brought to bear on anything he had once set his heart upon. When a student in college, he did a thing which it was said at the time no other person could possibly have done, — that is, to build, by willing subscription of all sorts and conditions of men, a neat and much-needed church, *without debt*,

in Walpole, N. H.: no other one made, as he did, the living link between the strong, remarkable, and influential family connection, to which he belonged by birth, and the many whom he won by the charm of his infinite good-humor, and his unaffected interest in all that made for the general good. I remember that it was said of him in those days, in testimony of his quick intelligence, — and it is confirmed to me now by the best of testimony, — that he knew *by face* (as Oriental shepherds are said to do) each individual sheep of the two hundred that made his father's flock.

In college, by his remarkable facility in mathematics, he at once took rank in a group of three in his own class, their chief being one of the most accomplished men of science in the country, President Thomas Hill, with whom his relations were those of close affection, — for I do not think he ever dreamed of rivalry with anybody. It is something not quite explained to me, that with this brilliant promise and versatile intelligence he had always contented himself so easily in the most modest sphere and the quietest lines of service. After the strain of war-time he was content to undertake for a while the modest toil of raising cranberries; while his chief and most durable success was perhaps as a teacher of boys. Not long after the war, he undertook the difficult enterprise of the school at Eaglewood, N. J., but the military methods and traditions of that school were hardly congenial to him; and, after a short stay in Yonkers, he "carried on his home school a few years at Sutton, Mass., then

moved it to Plymouth. In fact, he was a teacher from the time he took Theodore Weld's Eaglewood school at Perth Amboy till death, only combining with it preaching for a brief time at Yonkers and for a longer time at Plymouth." A hand guided by a gentler, braver, and more patient spirit than his never laid down its appointed task; and the day of his burial was a day of public mourning.

The death of President Hill, on the 21st of November, 1891, took from us one of the most marked and remarkable men, if we consider the special qualities of his many-sided intellect, that we have ever known among the members of his profession. It is possible that his withdrawal, of late years, to local activities and into secluded ways,<sup>1</sup> may have made his name less familiar among our younger men than it eminently deserves to be. His presence, however, has been constantly and powerfully felt in the field of education: it was fitting that the flags were displayed at half-mast on the city schools of Waltham the day of his funeral; and it is very much to be regretted that long before the summons of increasing years came to him (for his age was still a little under seventy-four) his life was almost that of a recluse from the wider companionship of his own profession. As it was my joy and

<sup>1</sup> He had been for eighteen years minister in Portland, Me., having served for fourteen years in Waltham, Mass., till his appointment as President of Antioch College, Ohio, in 1859, and subsequently six years (1862-68) as President of Harvard University. In 1871 he accompanied Professor Agassiz on his voyage to the Pacific Coast.

privilege, many years ago, to know him in some relations of very close intimacy, and as I have since received from him mental instruction and stimulus in some directions more than from any other companion or teacher, I desire to do what I may in these few memorial words to make him a very little less a stranger than I fear he is to the memory or the sympathies of many among us, — who certainly, if they had known him, would have gained much from the extraordinary wealth of his accurate knowledge, his clear and positive judgment, and his rare capacity of intellectual companionship and help.

It is nearly sixty years since he first appeared in Cambridge, — a sturdy unpolished youth of twenty, of rustic training, dimly conscious of growing powers, “a born Unitarian” (as he said of himself), though brought up among unpropitious surroundings, — modestly, simply, and eagerly desiring to enter the Divinity School. Wholly a stranger here, he went straight to seek advice of perhaps the only man whose name had a sound of welcome to him, Professor Henry Ware, Jr., who was not long in detecting his rare qualities of mind, and who urged him to begin at the beginning, and gain the benefit of the entire college course.

Taking this encouragement gladly and thankfully, he was fortunate in spending a little time with Rev. Rufus P. Stebbins, in Leominster, and then, by his advice, something more than a year as a student in Leicester Academy, where his faculty brightened and expanded rapidly in the landscape of those bold hills. Here he studied (as



he afterwards explained to me) the lights, distances, and atmospheric effects, as well as the commoner field of wild plants and song-birds,<sup>1</sup> with the same curious precision which marked all his observation of nature. "His knowledge of all natural objects," writes the Rev. Samuel May, "was most notable while here, chiefly of plants, etc., wherein even then — an apparently raw, awkward youth — he showed a surprising exactness of knowledge. He seemed to us *to know everything* about plants and flowers; could answer every question raised at school or elsewhere." In college he was easily the first man, intellectually, in his class, which included several distinguished names; in particular, he was chief in a group of three classmates, of rare mathematical talent, one of them afterwards his connection by marriage, Frederick Knapp, with whom his association through life was peculiarly close and tender.

It was in good part by our common acquaintance with this dear friend that I came quite early in his college course to know him somewhat nearly; and this led, a little later, to a season of close personal intimacy, which entitles me to recall some traits of his character not (I think) very generally known. I refer, in particular, to a quality likely to be hidden from most, not only by the natural modesty and self-respect of a self-respecting man, but by the highly characteristic intellectual self-reliance, or

<sup>1</sup> An anecdote told me by Dr. Hedge relates that he first attracted the interest of the man afterwards most influential in nominating him for his post at Harvard by his singular skill in imitating the warble of one of our native song-birds.



self-assertion, which accompanied it. I mean, along with a vein of deep personal piety, a *humility* of spirit equally profound, an almost morbid sensitiveness as to some forms of moral evil, or peril, and a keenness — almost agony — of self-reproach, such as men of his bold intellectual temperament rarely betray. This was, so far as one could see, purely an inward experience of the soul: his life, I am very certain, was as pure as a child's; but his is the single example I recall, among the companions of my earlier years, of that desponding *conviction of sin*, which is at the heart of so much religious biography, and gives their vein of pathos to so many Christian hymns. It is rarely, in these days of more balanced emotion, that we hear one seriously accuse himself of *deserving* the wrath of an Almighty Judge, and the agony of being cast into outer darkness forever, in remorse at some imaginary guilt. Yet why not that, as well as some men's preposterous claim of a clear title to celestial joys forever?

This may probably have been only a passing mood (though a genuine one) presently outgrown. As I think, it was a mood of that deep *awe* with which, through life, he habitually thought upon the Infinite and Eternal; I might call it a reflection of that phase of experience from the deep background of the awakened Conscience. And it seems not at all unlikely that this was part of the same mental habit that kept him from entering, in later life, into some of those radical forms of thought which have attracted most men of his

mental calibre in the present generation. The *topics* which they discuss he discussed also, — freely, familiarly, copiously, — but always within what we may call, by comparison, the lines of the old theology. Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, which had his absolute esteem in the days when I knew him best, remained (I think) to the last his type of the most convincing treatment of the Christian evidences; and he adhered, not blindly but with clear critical intelligence, to Agassiz's interpretation of the law of organic development, in opposition to anything that might possibly be construed as a quasi-mechanical evolution, under conditions of a scientific determinism. He was, it is possible, too much a stranger to the *habit of thought* characteristic of our time; at any rate, his plea against it lacks the force that might have been given by accepting it first *provisionally*, and being (so to speak) baptized into the spirit of it, till he should, as has been elsewhere expressed, have "come out on the other side." Thus, as if in a certain distrust of what an unfettered run of speculation might lead to in a mind of so rare activity and self-reliance, he kept himself, theologically, close moored to the anchorage and held by the fastenings of his earliest faith. This, it may be, weakened his influence with a large class whom it was eminently to be wished that his mind might reach; but doubtless he felt it to be better for his mental peace, while it certainly helped and widened his true work in the larger community outside.

His logic, withal, in dealing with such matters,

was in some directions very bold and radical. Thus he was so positive in referring the operation of natural laws to the direct act of the Almighty that he would not admit that God could create an elastic substance, — that is, one which would react by its own energy : the rebound was the immediate push or pull of a celestial will : nay, every wavelet of light or heat was (so to speak) fabricated from instant to instant by the same voluntary act of God ; or, if you brought up the cases of poisons, contagions, or hereditary malady, he would reply that God had so bound himself by the laws which he has made that we by our own act can compel him to exert his power in this or that way, and in no other. That is, he would serenely accept this result of his logic, whatever one might suggest to the contrary. On the other hand, nothing could be more beautiful and instructive than the illustrations he was fond of giving, out of the wealth of his knowledge of natural things, — as in the arrangement of leaf-buds on the twig of a plant, or from the laws of celestial mechanics, — to show with what infinite forethought and skill the working out of all natural phenomena has been pre-arranged to solve, as we may say, the problem of the greatest advantage with the least expenditure of force. And he liked to tell how Professor Peirce, who had published a college text-book on “Curves, Functions, and *Forces*,” altered the title to “Curves, Functions, and *Motions*,” recognizing that “force” is a “theological term” : there is no other Force but God.

It illustrates the eager and restless mental ac-

tivity already spoken of, that the conversation I most distinctly recall in which that mood of contrite emotion asserted itself led directly (by what channel I cannot call to mind) to a discussion of the elementary grounds of mathematics and physics, which beguiled of sleep the whole of a long winter night, till his accurate reading of the stars startled us with the warning that it was near six o'clock. And it shows, too, the tenacity of his mental habit that long years after, when suddenly called to address a convention of teachers in Michigan, he took up the argument of this same discussion and expanded it into a scheme, or method, of general intellectual training (afterwards published); giving credit, also, to the circumstances under which it had arisen, in the meditation of the night-watches upon our bed, so that the assembly, in its vote of thanks for the lecture, included its gratitude for "Aunt Harriet's cup of tea," whose potency, he averred, had nerved us to the debate.

While I am upon this point, I will add that his peculiar genius in mathematics had no more characteristic expression than in his favorite opinion — not only that the forms of the universe, including in them all types of living organism, are throughout the *loci* of mathematical formulæ known to and constructed by the Divine Mind, but that every formula which contains a mathematical truth has (presumably) its actual realization in existing fact. He has given a very interesting exposition of this as touching the square root of negative quantities (the so-called impossible or imaginary quantities, involving

the mysterious factor  $\sqrt{-1}$ ), in a paper published in the "Christian Examiner,"<sup>1</sup> showing how it appears in certain laws of reflected light. But a still more curious example is shown in his investigation (or, as he called it, "inventing") of Curves, which I will illustrate by an anecdote. Calling upon him one day at the President's office, I found him engaged for some few minutes, and, to while away the time, he asked me to contemplate the following formula,  $\rho = ar$ ,<sup>2</sup> and see what I could make of it, — which was, naturally, nothing. He then explained the formula, showing how, by assigning different arbitrary values to  $a$ , a wonderful variety of curves could be developed, some of them extremely intricate and beautiful. He fully believed that the organic world was made up (so to speak) of the realizations of such curves, in infinite variety, from a like formula existing (if I may so express myself) in the mind of God. And he told me how Benjamin Peirce, that prince of mathematicians, in whom imagination and reverence kept pace with all the movements of his thought, found him once engaged in these constructions, and, being fascinated by the theory, brought in Agassiz to see; and Agassiz, his eye being caught by one of the forms, exclaimed, "Why, that is the very shape taken at one stage of its growth in the nerve-cord of a crab!" The explorer was delighted with this confirmation of so dear a

<sup>1</sup> In March, 1858, article on "Physical and Celestial Mechanics."

<sup>2</sup> Here  $\rho$  signifies the radius of curvature at a given point, and  $r$  the distance of that from a given fixed point. Thus, if  $\rho = r$  (or  $a = 1$ ), the curve will be a circle.



theory. And it is possible that some of my readers, who remember President Hill's criticism on the Darwinian doctrine, given at Springfield in 1877, may be interested in the illustration here offered of his way of thinking upon these things.

His study of nature, too, was aided by a faculty of observation singularly balanced and keen. He once had charge of a magnetic observatory temporarily set up in the college yard, where I spent many a summer vacation evening with him ; and I remember his telling me that he could in a clear sky see the satellites (or a satellite) of Jupiter with his naked eye. I have mentioned his precision of ear for the melody of song-birds ; and with this was joined a theory that every melodious phrase, or sequence of notes, has its precise meaning to the thought interchangeable with no other, — as he has illustrated in the *Christian Examiner*<sup>1</sup> by a very curious series of experiments made with the aid of a friend, whose musical organization was equally sensitive, but in a wholly different way. And this should dictate strictly, he held, the uses to which any musical phrase might be put. It was falsehood and profanation, for example, to turn a tender operatic melody, like "*Batti, batti*," to pious use as "*Smyrna*." "That is not a hymn tune," said his respondent (who was perfectly ignorant of music): "it is the billing and cooing of two lovers," — which is, in fact, what Mozart meant it for. Under this theory, he composed a tune himself, which (as he intended it should) carried back his sister's memory

<sup>1</sup> September, 1855, in an article on "Church Music."



to some rural scene of their childhood, not by any association of sounds, but by the *thought* thus spelled out in the dialect of music.

With the same precision he would turn his hand to almost any form of manual, even artistic skill, sculpture and painting included ; and a little before he set out with Agassiz upon their voyage to the Pacific, his first word of salutation, when I went to say good-by, was to bid me take a posture for the photographic apparatus he had set up for practice in his barn at Waltham. Still more interesting is the story of his "Occultator." Discussing with Professor Peirce the very intricate problem (to pure mathematics) of the moon's path among the stars, he had maintained that this could be represented by mechanical apparatus accurately enough to be of service in the calculation of eclipses, determinations of time, and thereby the fixing of geographical positions. The professor, knowing his mechanical aptness, gave it him as a task to put the mechanism of it into shape. This lay in his mind for two or three weeks, without his giving much thought to it, till one morning, waking at four o'clock, he decided to invent it then and there ; and did it so effectively that a couple of hours later, on getting up, he whittled a model of his "Occultator" out of a shingle, accurately enough to give the time within (I think) about a minute. Some years after, wishing to give a young student the means of some vacation earnings, he perfected the instrument, which was used to great advantage in hundreds of observations made by direction of the "Nautical Almanac" for surveys

in the Western Territories, which would, it was said, have been quite impracticable — at any rate, quite too costly — without this mechanical aid.

He was, withal, keenly sensible at times of one mental lack, — the gift of clear, fluent, and effective literary expression. These things go by comparison, and it is not likely that the readers of his well-reasoned, plain, and instructive papers ever thought of the lack. But sometimes the indescribable quality we call *style* is the only thing needed to the wide and brilliant reputation which by every other quality one seems sure of attaining. He probably underrated the merits of his own literary art, — though it is certain that we have rarely known a cultivated man in whom mere skill of expression bore so low a ratio to the general mass of mental power. Still, he was a scholar of no mean accomplishment in purely literary fields. Many of his brief poems have original melody, as well as fancy; he delighted in reproduction of the ancient lyric measures in sufficiently melodious English; and he was confident (as he told me once) that, if he chose to give his mind to it, he could translate the great chorus of the *Agamemnon* line for line and accent for accent, — in which feat he would probably have shown (as Lowell said of Browning) that “the study of Greek had taught him a language far more difficult than Greek.” I speak of it here only as an illustration of the curious versatility and self-confidence which accompanied his great mental gifts.

In this slight sketch, mostly made up from memories more than forty years away, I have attempted

to give a hint of those qualities in which he was *individualized*, and different from any other whom I have equally well known. And I cannot express too strongly the impression that in general wealth of understanding, in clear, precise, and classified knowledge of natural facts in the greatest variety of fields, with power both to grasp them as a whole and to group them in intricate, subtle, and instructive combinations, I have not known any that could be fairly called his equal: our friend Calthrop, of Syracuse, is the only one I can easily compare with him; and in him this quality is joined with an eager and buoyant temper, a hearty alliance with the spirit of the latest science, and a faculty of brilliant exposition, or improvisation, which make him our best interpreter on many of the same lines of thought with those I have here dwelt upon.

But I cannot refrain from adding here, as especially characteristic of President Hill, the supreme value which he set upon *pure mathematics*, as the best groundwork of mental training, as well as the surest guide to the interpretation of the material universe. I have heard him tell how the eye of a pupil visibly brightened from month to month, and the intelligence ripened, under the fine tonic of this mental discipline, — an experiment the more interesting to me, since it was told me to encourage a parallel experiment I was just then making, which had a similar result. But these words are not meant for biography or eulogy, only to bring freshly into memory some traits of one of our men worthiest to be remembered.

Died in Madison, Wisconsin, December the ninth, 1889, William Francis Allen, Professor of History in the State University, at the age of fifty-nine.

When a child, I do not suppose that any one ever thought of my brother as precocious, though (as it usually does) the scholar's vocation clearly showed itself in him as early as five or six. In fact, his intellectual maturity was of slow growth, and he was twenty-six when he took his first permanent position, as classical instructor in a private school. His boyhood would have been described, though sufficiently athletic and vigorous, as grave and gentle rather than robust; and he would be remembered as one whose candid soul repelled evil (to copy Goethe's phrase) as a duck's back sheds water, — while those inevitable touches leave with most of us a stain that seems, it may be, only skin-deep, but costs the pain of half a lifetime before they are quite washed out. But he certainly lacked neither vigor nor cheer: his interest in the people and affairs of his native town was healthy and keen; and afterwards, in Göttingen, he delighted his companions by throwing in fair wrestle (which he had learned on the village green) an English visitor rejoicing in his strength, who had ventured to jeer at the lack of manly sports in our Yankee schools. He was, for that day, rather late in college, graduating at twenty-one, above medium rank, but not among the first. But he was not personally ambitious, and he had a noble and distinguished group of classmates, among whom the intimacy through life has been uncommonly strong,

affectionate, and tenacious. Few can have been more deeply indebted, or in more ways, to college companionship.

A life of three years, after leaving college, as private tutor in a New York family of rare intelligence and refinement, added a phase of experience which in the large variety of posts he has since filled proved of great value to the country-bred youth. A natural diffidence was absorbed (so to speak) in that unobtruding suavity of manner which remained characteristic of him. In particular, however, it was of service in giving him the leisure—from lack of which many of us suffer through our lives—for weighing with great deliberation his convictions, purposes, and capacities, so as to lay out clearly his plan of life. His first choice would have been the study of theology and the Christian ministry; but the theological temper was less tolerant among us then than now, liberalism was still weathering the raw air of controversy, and he gave up the thought, reluctantly,—partly, perhaps, because he doubted his aptitude for the hardiness of public speech, but chiefly because his honest thought was too “radical” to suit that temper which he would neither conciliate nor assail. He had, as I remember, serious thoughts of the law, which shaped his reading for a time; but he had neither the forensic temper nor the vigor of eyesight (slightly impaired by illness in childhood) to justify in his own view his choice of that arduous profession. And it was distinctly with the feeling that he accepted something less than his



first or perhaps his second choice, that he told me his decision to make a *vocation* of classical and historical study, which, he modestly thought, might make a useful and a needed service.

Having made this election, he spent two years as a student in Europe, finding there some of the most eminent of instructors,—among them the scholar historian Mommsen,—and including in his field of study Germany, Italy, and Greece. There, too, the great privilege attended him, of the best and nearest of mental companionship, not only of those who were his fellow-students here, but of some (as of two friends whom he visited afterward in Basel and in Ghent) who have placed themselves in the very first rank as authorities in their own field. In these pleasant student days there occurred, too, a curious evidence of his happy gift to win the confidence of all sorts and conditions of men; for once, when by a break of correspondence I had failed of an appointment with him at Martigny, and had passed by on the other side, he not only was forced to leave his hotel bill unpaid, but, by a miracle of mutual assurance which astonishes me to this day, borrowed money of his Swiss landlord, and went cheerily on, to complete his journey. Rome and Athens were not so familiar ground to scholars then as now; and the opportunity of them both, with the delightful companionship of his classmate Professor Goodwin, gave him an advantage which he always felt, in the particular task he had set himself,—the interpretation of antiquity into life.



His course since has been publicly and sufficiently told: the course, mainly, of a patient and successful teacher for three-and-thirty years, with the break of two years' service with the Sanitary Commission during the War, and with the incidental tasks of editorship and literary criticism. Engaged in such tasks, he may almost be said to have died, like so many great scholars, pen in hand; since, only a few hours before his last sleep, he dictated with great precision certain changes to be made in the final proof of a work then going through the press. For he had set his heart strongly, years before, on accomplishing two scholarly tasks,—a student's edition of the *Annals of Tacitus*, an author and work that especially attracted him, and a school *History of Rome*, in which he gathers very compactly, and sets forth with singular clearness, the results of intelligent study begun under Mommsen thirty-five years before, and never lost sight of since as his most important single task.

For several years he had been the senior and the most trusted officer of his own university, and consequently most looked to for outside work. Of what that outside work meant to him, I venture to give the following hint, copied from a letter written a few days before his death:—

“I have been unusually busy this fall with two sets of proof-sheets in addition to my regular work, and my duties as church trustee, director of the Free Library, curator of the Historical Society, president of the Academy, and superintendent of the Sunday-school. Then, besides, I found there was nobody

just at this juncture who could be president of the Benevolent Society except myself. Affairs were in a delicate and somewhat critical stage, the process of transformation from a committee of our church to a general charity having been practically, but not completely, accomplished. It seemed that there was no one who could conduct the last stages of this process (or so they said) excepting me; so I took the place rather than see any failure in the work. I had to appoint a lot of committees from all the churches, and got it successfully done, — every church being now well represented, and the society in good running order. To add to this, I was appointed on the Faculty committee to investigate the hazing disturbance, and this has taken a great deal of time [sometimes as many as three meetings in a day, and once, the whole of Saturday]. Fortunately, all these jobs are coming to an end.”

It was, indeed, on coming home from the last of these meetings, that he lay down utterly wearied, — as it proved, with symptoms of a return of pneumonia, from which he partly rallied, but only to pass away gently, a few days later, as it were in sleep, without a sigh or pang. I will copy, too, these words received from Madison, written three days after his burial: —

“I suppose without coming out here one could not imagine the feeling towards him, and if any expressions should seem superlative, you may be sure they are not the slightest exaggeration. His special refinement and courtesy to every one has made a most deep impression among these western people. From the President and all the leading men down to the

poor German woman who brought her three little children to say she was going to take them up to the funeral, all seem to have idolized him."

I give these words not merely as testimony of the personal traits that have left a memory widely beloved, but to add what was equally characteristic, — that with this suavity of manner was joined a judgment true as steel and hard as flint on all matters of political or ethical concern; and that, with all his devotion to constructive religious work, especially in his later years, he never forgot his early experience, but remained just as inflexibly, almost resentfully, opposed to anything that seemed, ever so remotely, to narrow the Christian name or fellowship.

Samuel Longfellow, again, is best known to the present generation as a leader in the front line of religious radicalism. He even discarded in the later edition of his "hymns" those tender lines composed by his brother for his own induction to the preacher's office, beginning

"Christ to the young man said,"

because he would not, by that one name, disturb the simplicity of his faith in the one Source of the soul's higher life. And yet, for some time after he left the Divinity School in 1845, he still held, in the devoutest spirit, what would now be called a very conservative form of Unitarian theology. Among his later essays and addresses are passages reflecting upon phases in the political or social

conflict of their day, strong with ethical heat and the eloquence of an indignant conscience; yet, almost to the years of full intellectual maturity, one would have said that his temper was that of a somewhat dreamy piety, and a poetic optimism abhorrent of all revolutionary strife. His convictions of truth and righteousness were spoken in a tone that lacked nothing to be sturdy and robust; while his physical constitution, though no way devoid of a healthy vigor, seems especially to have craved "seasons of retreat" oftener than can commonly fall to the man of a busy profession in our day. The mountains, the seaside, the Azores, a series of long holidays in Europe or elsewhere, all went to the repose and ripening of his mind; to say nothing of the rare privilege, as it proved, that less than fifteen years of settled ministry, all told, were unevenly divided among three congregations so different, yet each in its way so helpful, as those in Fall River, in Brooklyn, and in Germantown. His "Lords of Life" seem to have known that he needed a widely varied and a somewhat delicate training.

In respect to the quality of his religious discourse, we may call it a very pure and single-hearted presentment of the "Transcendental" faith, in its more positive and masculine type, as it was evolved under the pressure of the controversies that, in their gravest but gentlest form, made part of his life in its shaping period. His expression of that faith is singularly free from any intrusion of a spirit properly critical: it is little, if at all, modified by

the results of historical or economic study. He seems never to have felt the pressure of that scientific drift, by some called "positivist" and by some "agnostic," which has so powerfully moulded a later mood of thinking; he seems never even to have been seriously tried by the logical conflict between his own buoyant optimism and those wrongs in political or social life against which his ethical judgment was so sternly matched. A happier mental temperament it would be difficult to imagine, in carrying on the actual task it was given him to do, particularly in administering those offices of consolation and cheer which made a frequent and a most blessed portion of it.

The first impression one gets from his published essays and discourses is, perhaps, that of a too predominating gravity. We miss the play of fancy we might have looked for, and welcome as relief the rare though felicitous illustration from travel or works of art. The tone of their plea for religious idealism and an exalted ethics we might almost call a monotone. From first to last they are (to copy his own phrase) an "appeal" in behalf of those phases in the higher life, and of the realities they assume in the spiritual sphere, which it was his particular mission to set forth. To set against this sustained and even elevation, we needed the very abundant selections given in the "Memoir" from his correspondence, especially that with Samuel Johnson, his nearest friend of forty years. Here we find the brighter, kindlier, and more playful moods of mind which we knew to be equally native



in him. In these the tone and phrase are often what we might call boyish. This temper happily continued with him to the last, and was in happy keeping with what was perhaps his most unique and characteristic gift, — his rare sympathy with boys, even rude and naughty boys, which gave him a joy in their company, and a moral hold upon them such that we cannot easily recall a parallel. When some dear little girls asked him once why he was not *quite* so kind to them, his answer was, "Perhaps because I never was a little girl myself!"

The name of Edmund Burke Willson, if not so widely known as it deserves, brings with it associations of a singular modesty, purity, and manliness that have endeared it to a wide company of friends.

I first met Mr. Willson when we entered the Divinity School together in the summer of 1840; and while years have done much to color, warm, and deepen the first impression, they have done nothing, I think, to alter it. Candor, modesty, and clear intelligence were traits as plainly written then on that winning face of his, as we have read them there in all the years since. Some circumstances brought us especially near together, — though not, perhaps, in the very confidential intimacy that generally comes to one as a sort of surprise. In age we were only six days apart: he was by so much the elder. And our fathers were country ministers, somewhat widely separated in the same county, each having a share, not very



unlike, in the liberal religious movement of their day. In some degree he had the advantage of a certain grave maturity of character; and this was perhaps favored by training in a rural academy, which in some points may compare to advantage with the hothouse culture some immature natures undergo in college life. Again, while he was of seemingly vigorous health and of very companionable temper, he lacked something of the physical hardihood and robustness common at that period of life. At least, I do not remember that either in long walks, rough fun, or athletic sports he showed the energy of some of his companions. If it were so, it may possibly have been due to some delicacy of organization, such as we easily associate with moral purity like his, though we might not suspect it in a young man of his ordinarily excellent health. An incident of this time may serve as an indication of what I mean. One morning he came into my room suffering from a swollen eyelid, caused by a blow or a sting,—I forget which; and, touching it lightly to describe the swelling, he fainted instantly away. This did not appear to be due to any sudden or acute shock of pain; and it seemed to reveal a degree of nervous susceptibility that, perhaps, made a part of his physical or even moral temperament.

On the other hand, when I think of him in the little group of eight, which included two men of such very marked and diverse quality of genius as Charles Henry Brigham and John Weiss, it is most interesting to remember how, with his rare modesty, candor, and constitutional self-distrust,

he always held his own steadily at all points; so that there was probably not one in the class who so uniformly kept the moral confidence and intellectual respect of us all. As a student he was patient, faithful, and diligent, — especially faithful, I should say, in what might seem the dryer and more formal tasks of study, rather than enthusiastic or brilliant in any one line. On his feet in actual debate (a severe test to most men of that age) he was what we have always known him who have heard him, too infrequently, in later years, — cool, easy, self-possessed, never in the least confused in argument, clear in statement, with a quiet decision of speech that counts as a far greater force than emotional rhetoric or boisterous declamation. In literary taste I doubt whether refined fancy, splendor of imagination, or intellectual depth ever weighed as much with him as what came nearer home to his grave but genial and sunny temper. One might envy him the hours of innocent fun he found in "Pickwick," a new book then; while some of us were victims rather to the sentimentalisms of "The Old Curiosity Shop." And I do not think that he was ever drawn (as most of us were, sooner or later) into the transcendental vortices of "Sartor Resartus."

One would not do justice to the rare intellectual quality which has been recognized in Mr. Willson through his more than fifty years of uninterrupted public service, — eight in Grafton, seven in West Roxbury, and thirty-six in Salem, including a brief episode as chaplain in the War, — without knowing

something of his still rarer humility of spirit, and the deep self-distrust that saddened some of his more confidential communications. His mental temperament was sound rather than robust, and he was not easily persuaded of the real strength which was his to put forth if he would. Devout by habit and conviction, he felt more keenly than most men some of the changing phases of belief that we have witnessed during those fifty years, as they touched moments and moods of his personal experience. That his own faith remained what it was,—calm, strong, even radiant,—through all the changes here implied, lay not so much in any positive or aggressive quality of his thought, but rather in an unusually clear, firm, serene, and steadfast reliance on moral principle, chastened (as I think) by an unusually humble as well as sincere and living piety. This candid grace of soul, which all men saw in him, was the root of his great and real strength.

Willingly as he gave forth that strength in the accepted lines of duty, and readily as he assumed any responsibility which this might enjoin, it was hard to persuade him, sometimes, to stretch out his hand for a success or an influence outside that well-defined range, which yet might seem easily within his reach. To say that he lacked courage or ambition might not be quite correct; but there was, what many might fail to suspect, a hidden root of self-distrust. The courage he showed at an emergency was sheer moral courage, though carrying with it a fine intellectual capacity, which he was too slow to admit. I never knew, for example, what he was

capable of in the way of forceful literary expression till I read a sermon of his on "Bad Friday," preached after the surrender of Burns in 1854; when I wrote to him at once to persuade him (as I hoped) to more effort in that direction, — purely in regard of the fine, clear, manly eloquence of style in which he had shown himself a master. Another instance was on one of the very few occasions when he stood in a post of special interest or dignity in his own profession, addressing the "Berry Street Conference" in a discourse of "reminiscences" of rare beauty and instruction, — a discourse which, I think, was never given to the wider public. Again, the one literary opportunity of his life seemed to come to him when our classmate Charles Brigham left him, with Dr. A. A. Livermore, in charge of a copious mass of papers, the labor of a busy lifetime, with an understanding that some sort of a memorial volume would be published. He consulted me — naturally, since I had just been following up Mr. Brigham's lines of work in Ann Arbor — as to his own share in the joint task, which was the biographical, sending me, among other papers, a very unique, curious, and detailed diary, in which our friend had written out in private hours the story of his early life, — especially his Divinity School years, with incidents, confessions, and resolutions, such as to throw a very interesting light on his real experience. This rich and too abundant material seemed to overpower Mr. Willson's modest estimate of his own ability to cope with it. I vainly urged the lines on which I thought what was valuable in it might be preserved; and, to

my great regret, a form and scale of memorial were determined on — as I suppose, by judgment of the publishers — which shrank the proposed biography to a scanty and pallid outline, greatly disappointing to those who knew something already of its subject, and wholly inadequate to portray that vigorous, versatile, energetic, restless, busy, and somewhat wayward intellectual manhood. To do that well required not a less delicate and discriminating, but something of a bolder, hand.

Further, with his great moral sincerity and courage, and his singularly clear, common-sense conviction on points of practical judgment, Mr. Willson was diffident of urging his own opinion against the opposing view of his associates. He preferred to accept their decision, but himself to retire from the field. Such, at least, was the account he gave to me of his partial inaction, in later years, in matters of denominational policy as to which he might be supposed to carry weight. Where, on the other hand, the question turned on points of principle rather than practice, there was no man whose word — clear, placid, firm, generous, serene — was more readily given, or was listened to with more uniform, affectionate, and venerating delight by his younger brethren, of whom I was always glad to count as one. No one who knew him but esteemed him worthy of the highest conventional honors of his profession, and probably anticipated them for him. If there is one thing we could regret in such a life, it is that its entire strength was not put forth in some more widely conspicuous field. But this is also its best



praise and truest victory, — that that entire strength was given, with perfect fidelity and without any stint, to the particular work he had chosen ; while its highest reward was found in the loving appreciation and perfect confidence of those whom he served in it.

With Octavius Frothingham's death passed away the most brilliant and interesting figure — excepting one — of those who were the younger liberal leaders of the last generation. His services to our common life of thought were so many, and his contribution to it was so rich, that it is not easy at first glance to fix upon a point of view for seeing it as a whole. Happily, he has given us the hint of what we seek in the title of the hymn written for his graduation from the Divinity School, — that by which most of us, it is likely, know him best : "The Soldiers of the Cross." This militant phrase strikes the key-note which seems most readily to bring that instrument of many strings into clear harmony. The invocation it addresses to the Almighty is that valiant Hebrew one, "Thou Lord of Hosts." The hymn itself is the very finest idealized conception of the holy war that summons the faithful and brave. Its imagery is of the arming, the vigil, and the vow of a young knight, to whom the crusade he embarks in is a glorious thing, for the joy of conflict it offers, no less than for the nobility of the cause it fights for. And, then, the proud humility of the knightly temper ! for, with all his militant quality, no one ever saw or listened



to our friend without being chiefly impressed by the *knight*, not the mere soldier, that was in him,—the consecration of an austere vow, the sweetness and courtesy of a perfect gentleman.

In his eight years at Salem, we who knew him at a little distance thought of him, perhaps, as one especially fitted for the thoughtful, refined, and cultivated companionship which is easiest found — by a stranger, at least — in little provincial capitals, where life has already grown mellow, and is even, it may be, slightly touched in spots with gray. It is probable, however, that these were not merely years of preparation for the wider, noisier field, but that just then his mind more craved solitary study than many companions in his thought. Among his clear-cut recollections of one who was the best of companions, John Weiss, he speaks of that goodly fellowship known to the initiated of that day as the “Hook and Ladder,” — an association of something less than twenty, which included such names as Dr. Hedge, Starr King, William B. Greene, Charles T. Brooks, John Ware, Charles H. Brigham, Thomas T. Stone, Dexter Clapp, George W. Briggs, Nathaniel Hall, John Merrick, and (I think) David A. Wasson, of whom only three remain. But, if I can trust my memory here, what he appeared to seek in it was personal acquaintance rather than discussion of opinion. It is as a cheery and bright presence I recall him, as one who seems in the retrospect during those years to have held his forces in reserve.

It had something, accordingly, like the ring of

a declaration of independence, or the manifesto of a fresh career, when we heard that the wave of the antislavery conflict had reached him in those troubled days, lifted him from his moorings in that quiet haven, and set him afloat upon a wider and lonelier voyage. In the five years that followed, of his residence in Jersey City, he sometimes gave expression to a somewhat forlorn sense of solitude, as if he either did not find the field of work congenial, or else had come to feel that no constructive and satisfying outside work was to be done in it; so that it is easy to imagine that the experience was something like an experience of exile. Still, they were years possibly the most needed and fruitful of all, to save him (if ever there were danger) from growing into a mere man of letters or a mere platform orator, — years that made him, instead, a consecrated scholar, a well-equipped as well as eloquent interpreter of advancing thought in many of its higher ranges. Of the evidences of this growth, among the first and ablest was his exposition, in 1858, of the great critical work of Baur, which gave the earliest clear indication of the ground he held firmly, ever after, in the disputed province of historical criticism. Here, too, in a series of noteworthy papers, he first proved his mastery of the extraordinary fluency, ease, vigor, and brilliant touch which marked his literary handling of topics that in most men's hands lie quite outside the pale of literature.

The large opportunity of his life and the full assertion of his powers came with his removal to

New York in 1860. The story of his work here should be told by some one who knew face to face that remarkable group in which he was the chosen leader, and could report first-hand of a movement that will be better understood and more significant as years go by. The personal qualities he brought to bear in it were described by Mr. Chadwick in well-chosen words in the funeral address. I venture to add to this estimate only a few points suggested to me at a much greater distance ; for during those years I saw little of Mr. Frothingham personally, and heard only a single address of his in the actual scene of his ministration. It was such an address as he is well known to have been a master in, — clear, ready, self-possessed, carefully studied, but extemporaneous in delivery ; forcible, but not impassioned or in the least declamatory ; rather broad than vehement or especially vigorous in grasp ; about an hour in length ; in substance an exposition of what Comte's "Religion of Humanity" really means, at once comprehensive, critical, and sympathetic. It seemed to imply a movement of positive or constructive rather than merely critical theology, and in this view was perhaps a fair example of his ordinary address. If so, it was quite too purely intellectual, too destitute of appeal to feeling or even to imagination, to do more than hint, in the range of practice, the possibilities of a far-off future. It might even react, in some minds, toward a certain despondency and sense of helplessness. I wrote to him once, expressing somewhat warmly my appreciation of what he was doing, and of his own

quality as a leader in such high paths; and the first words of his reply were, "What good angel inspired you just then to write just that letter?" implying that it had helped lift him out of a black pit of self-distrust and sense of failure. The "thin sheet of ice," he lamented to his friend Chadwick, was too effective a non-conductor to the rays of common sympathy.

It was very likely some expression of this feeling that led to the report, when he left New York, that he confessed his effort there to have been a failure, even if he did not react into a conservative shrinking from it as something false and wrong. There is no reason whatever to suppose that his mind as to these matters was altered in the least. Of course he understood that the period he worked in was a "drift period in theology," — a phrase (by the way) sent him, as title and text, by me when editor of the "Christian Examiner," and wrought by him into one of his most characteristic essays; and, naturally enough, a drift period is not just the time to find firm standing-ground. But it sets its own preparatory task, nevertheless. And that task, in his hands, was honestly and ably done, not needing (we may hope) to be repeated; while the conviction that it had to be done may well have deepened the sense of weariness that comes in looking back on the patiently trodden way. It may, too, have deepened the grateful sense of relief and repose with which one reverts at sixty to tasks more quiet and genial, better suited to his advancing years than to those when he courted the stress of battle.

To the wearied soldier the furlough was well earned.

'The work of these later years speaks pleasantly for itself. The wonder was that the hand we thought tired out was still so diligent, deft, and swift; that the faculty we feared was permanently lamed was still so prompt and adequate to whatever might be required. I had occasion once to suggest his name as biographer and editor of the unfinished record left by our dearly honored friend David Wasson, not knowing that he was (probably) the one living man competent to that task. Such a memorial as that, or as the *Life of William Channing*; such a pair of thick, genial, and readable volumes as those which tell his recollections of Boston Unitarianism and Unitarians; such a series of papers as those appearing within these years, giving no hint that they were years of partial retirement and frequent invalidism, — these might well make an ample record of a literary life in its best noontide, not in its lingering afternoon.

A word might here be said to tell how good and how pleasant was the companionship of these later years. And this word might include mention of a trait which his friends have noted with perhaps as much admiration as any achievement of his robust years, — the untiring and perfect courtesy of his presiding, through many an hour that must have been unspeakably weary, in sessions of the Free Religious Association, whose very title seems to invite what is most formless and weary of all modes of human speech. If any such quality ever



did appear in those debates, I am sure that no one could have been more keenly sensitive of it than he, though that fine dissimulation let no one else suspect it. For his judgment of persons as well as of things was swift, keen, inevitable. By that bright rapier the dearest friend or the dearest foe was sure to be touched in the one vulnerable spot. No emotional heat ever spoiled the temper of his shining blade, or warped its straightforward thrust.

This group of contemporary names would be greatly incomplete if it lacked that of David Atkins Wasson. The record of his life has been so fully given in his own words and in Mr. Frothingham's memoir that little needs to be added here. His early training, "in extreme seclusion, in a rocky peninsula town of the coast of Maine," was widely different from those yet named. We heard of him first as the young, ardent, poetic "pastor of an Evangelical Church in Groveland, Mass;" but presently, in part under Theodore Parker's influence, he became a liberal of the liberals, and was abruptly dismissed in 1852. He was a man of the strenuous quality we soon learned to honor. If I were to give in a single phrase our thought of him, it would be that, in the very finest and highest sense, he was our example of a Christian Stoic. But what this means, I must let him show in his own words, taken from two letters written in the autumn of 1876:—



“Our people must have such a deal of hoping! Would not a little plain and cheerful courage serve for a change? Oh no, we are to hope so much that there shall be no place for courage. The truth is that the American appetite for sweets has got into the American mind. If one does not offer us spiritual pastry and cake, we think ourselves shabbily treated. A diet of turnips would be better for a while, until we got back to an appetite for simpler things. I thank the provider who sets before me a liberal repast of plain dishes, neither peppered with sarcasm, soured with misanthropy, nor sugared with optimism. . . . One’s words should have that rim of gracious not-saying. His thoughts should be like the words on a printed page, with a margin of white silence about them. There are so many whose speech not only has no margin, but slops quite over the page and spills itself into vacuity!”

“Your statement of the recent and existing tendencies of thought is, so far as I am qualified to judge, not only just as an indication of direction, but in the rarest degree adequate and felicitous. Of course, I can see what C. means in saying that it is ‘not cheerful reading.’ He is partly right. The fact described is not, in every aspect of it, and in every mood of the observer, a cheerful one. I don’t perceive that you at all tried to dress it up, and make it look cheerful. But you cheerfully confronted it, and saw and said what it is. I confess that to me the universe, as one must now see it, seems at times appallingly cold, and I look back with a half-regret to the old fireside view of the world, so snug and warm, with its good Father providing for every want

and soothing every distress, and its divine or semi-divine *major-domo* aiding with infinite tender care to make things comfortable. But this view is no longer possible; and besides, I am clearly of opinion that it has become nearly valueless as a means of moral support. At any rate, I must bear testimony for myself that the more of such belief I spare, the more I find myself morally braced. Take the belief in personal immortality, for example. I no longer lean upon it, and find it wholesome not to do so. I do not deny it, but must plant the foot upon what now is, not upon what may be hereafter. Indeed, my experience constantly teaches me more and more the virtue of abstinence in such matters. I speak only for myself; the case may be different with others. And yet, with the doctrine of immortality run into spiritism, who can help doubting its use in the immediate future? It may one day be re-born and come out better than new. In the mean time, duty and work are enough; and I find the simple diet invigorating.

“It seems to me, then, that you have stated the fact as it is; and I vote with you for the ‘cold bath.’”

Mr. Wasson had labored for some years on what should have been the monumental task of his life, a treatise or essay of political ethics, of which the earlier chapters were published with Mr. Frothingham's memoir. An increasing severity of judgment, and perhaps the lack of buoyancy of spirits, — an effect of his invalidism, — prevented the completion of this work, to the great disappointment of his friends. The languor, and the disposition to look for a more favorable season, characterizing the weary but delusive disease of which he died, also prevented

— what they urged upon him more than once — the gathering of his rare but choice productions in verse into a single volume. The last work of his pen, executed with great difficulty and delay by reason of partial blindness, was a review of Mr. Adams's "Emancipation of Massachusetts;" and, as to this, I happened to know that he felt more than once unequal to the effort, and even begged a friend to take the sheets of the book and complete the task for him. His writings have appeared in various journals; some of the best, I should suppose, in the "Radical;" but the finest of his essays I can recall, in thought and style, are a series in the "Christian Examiner," published during or near the time of the War. His title, "The Sword in Ethics," and a review of the career of Wendell Phillips, may perhaps recall to some persons these brilliant and strong essays. In a letter of March, 1863, he says: "If I write three hours a day for three days in succession, I am utterly prostrated. I have to read lying down, and must pay for every hour of work or play with more than an hour of extreme pain. Therefore I am slow." But that effort was the one great privilege, for which no cost was too dear.

The physical affliction from which he suffered through most of his life has been rightly stated to be due to an injury to the spine in his early youth. But, as false tales have been circulated as to what occasioned it, — one of them, told in print, that it was the cruelty of a shipmaster under whom he served, — it seems fit that the correct account should be given.

I called upon him about three months before his death, and found that he had suffered for about a month from an attack which severely affected his lungs (as was, indeed, very evident), so that his family were apprehending then the rapid decline that followed. When I asked him of his condition, he said he thought it was "the old trouble," not knowing the judgment of the physician. I then said I had heard a certain "myth" as to the cause of that trouble, and asked him how much of it was true. He answered, None at all. The real cause was this: He was, at the age of seventeen, though not large in person, very vigorous and athletic, and, in particular, an alert and powerful wrestler. It chanced that, at some local gathering in the political campaign of 1840, he was challenged to "try a fall" by a powerful young fellow, over six feet tall, of a quarrelsome clan; and, knowing the folly of it, at first refused. Under great pressure, he at length consented, on condition of having the usual advantage yielded to the smaller man, — putting both arms below those of his antagonist, — which was, however, denied. Then, for more than an hour, he submitted manfully to the taunts of the crowd, till it was offered that the two should stand as champions of their respective parties, when, in an evil moment, his better resolution gave way. Two falls out of three would give the victory. His opponent at first, as he expected, tried by leaping on him to crush him by sheer weight; but he "knew a trick worth two of that," and brought him in an instant to the ground. Then they grappled; and, clasping

his hands behind Wasson's back, the other tried to bend him double. It was a desperate struggle. But, by a violent effort, our young David foiled his big antagonist, and threw him a second time to the ground, — as he believed at the time, at the cost of his own life ; and, indeed, for a fortnight after he could not so much as turn himself in bed.

The life-long consequences of this terrible wrench, and its effect, in particular, in crippling that brilliant and vigorous career, seem to justify the telling of this story in detail. The suffering and illness, however, did not prevent many a sturdy display of force in the exacting labors of public oratory, any more than the patient and resolute tasks he set himself as writer and thinker. Indeed, no very serious alteration in health was manifest till within some six years, or thereabout, when his increasing blindness brought its special symptoms of infirmity. An operation for cataract, in the spring of 1881, was very successful in restoring the vision of one eye, which was, however, imperfect, having been hurt by the stroke of a cow's horn in boyhood, so that it seemed expedient to repeat the operation on the other eye. This, most unfortunately, resulted in the destruction of the organ and a summer's sickness with much suffering, and a permanent lowering of his general health. It was under these infirmities — with the alleviation of friends, books, and the skilful culture of his little vineyard — that the last victories of his life were won. He died on the twenty-first of January, 1887.





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